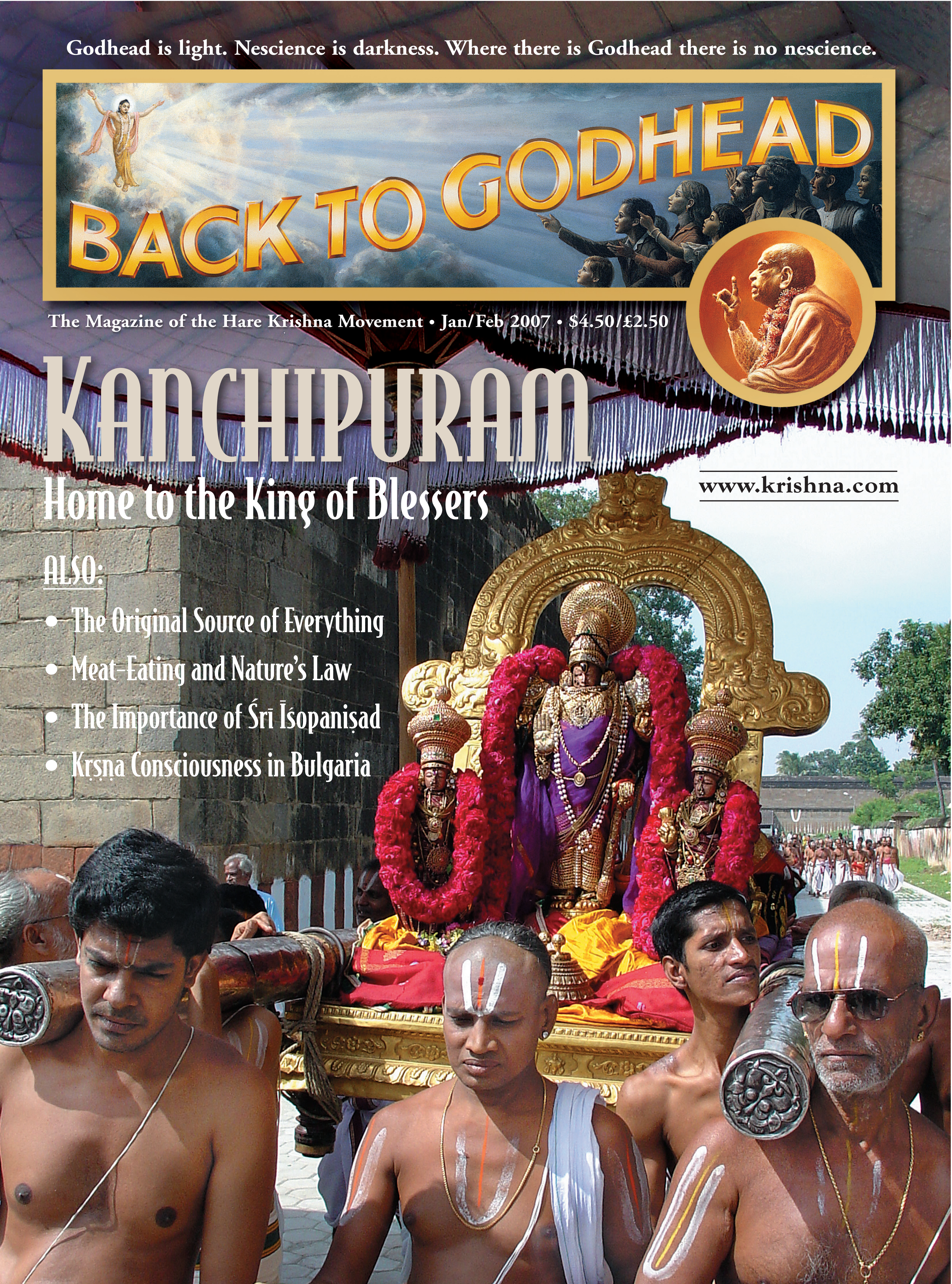

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Jan/Feb 2007 • $4.50/£2.50

KANCHIPURAM

Home to the King of Blessers

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- Meat-Eating and Nature's Law
- The Importance of Śrī Īśopaniṣad
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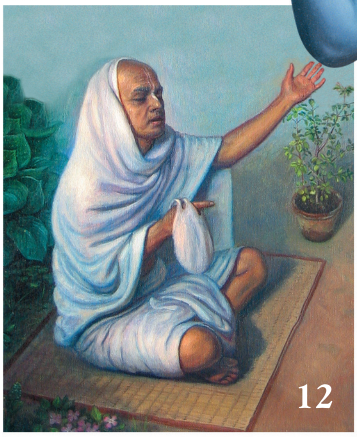
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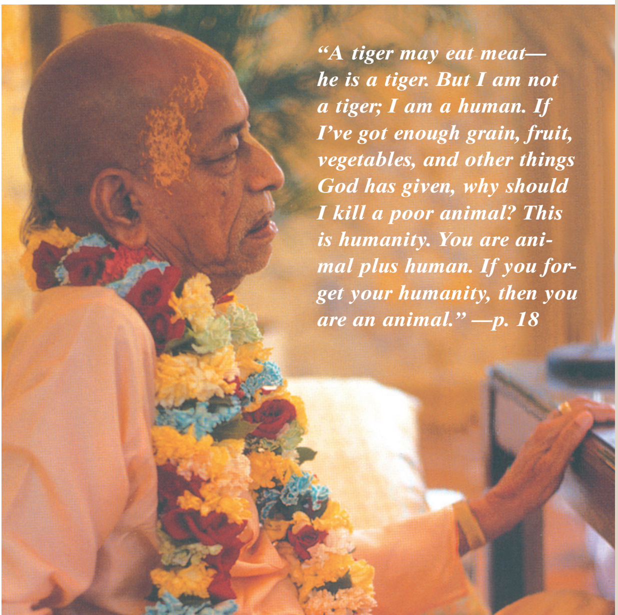
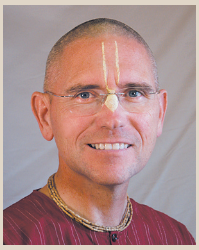
COVER Priests and devotees at the temple of Lord Varadarāja in Kanchipuram, India, observe the millennia-old practice of taking the temple deities on a twice-daily tour around the temple. Please see the article beginning on page 46. (Photo by Adbhuta Hari Dāsa.)



> *"A tiger may eat meat—he is a tiger. But I am not a tiger; I am a human. If I've got enough grain, fruit, vegetables, and other things God has given, why should I kill a poor animal? This is humanity. You are animal plus human. If you forget your humanity, then you are an animal." —p. 18*

WELCOME

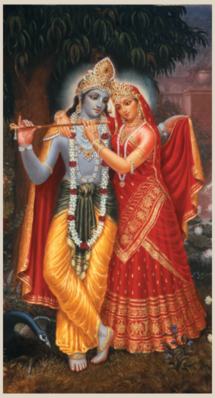


OUR COVER STORY takes us to South India, where temples follow traditions that go back thousands of years. In *Kanchipuram: Home to the King of Blessers,* Adbhuta Hari Dāsa writes of his visit to Kanchipuram and the temple of the Viṣṇu deity known as Varadarāja ("king of those who give benedictions"). One way the Lord gives benedictions is by accepting our offerings of food to Him and returning them to us as His *prasādam* ("mercy"). In *When Does Food Become Prasādam?* Śivarāma Swami provides enlightening insights into this spiritual phenomenon.

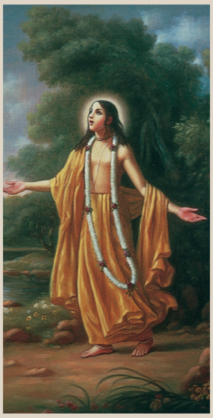
Because the Supreme Lord is everywhere, only He can be the greatest giver of benedictions, and in *The Original Source of Everything,* Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies how God is present everywhere. To teach about this and other aspects of God, Prabhupāda translated and commented on many books from the Vedic library. In *The Importance of Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* Satyarāja Dāsa give us some clues to understanding why Prabhupāda chose an *Upaniṣad* to be one of the first books he translated.

Learning the science of God includes learning about our relationship with Him. In this issue we present a lesson on that topic in *The Eternal Religion,* an extract from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's magnificent book *Jaiva-dharma.*

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER (under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) **His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

EDITOR Nāgarāja Dāsa • **ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Drutakarmā Dāsa, Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa, Satyarāja Dāsa, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī • **EDITORIAL ADVISOR** Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami • **EDITORIAL ASSISTANT** Madhava Smullen • **DESIGN / LAYOUT** Yamarāja Dāsa • **PROOFREADER** Keśīhanta Dāsa • **ARCHIVES** Rañjita Dāsa • **CUSTOMER SERVICE** Ijya Dāsa, Lokasākṣinī Devī Dāsī • **CIRCULATION** Ganga Sutton, Manjari Gauthier, Shanti Day • **ACCOUNTS** Puṇya Kīrti Dāsa • **WEBSITE** Balarama Bosch, Jivana Wilhoit, Manu Kaseder, Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

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Letters

The Position of Earth

Where is the earth in the order of all the planets, in spiritual and material terms? And through devotion can we go to Kṛṣṇa's abode after this life? Or do we have to go through more lives and more planets to reach Kṛṣṇa's abode?

Dharmesh Nayee
Via the Internet

Our reply: According to the Vedic literature there are fourteen planetary systems, six heavenly planetary systems above the earth and seven demonic planetary systems below it.

Modern scientists see the earth as orbiting the sun, between the orbits of Venus and Mars. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* expresses the solar system from an earth-centered viewpoint, with the sun orbiting the earth, and Venus and Mars orbiting the sun. The result is the same; it is just a difference of where you are viewing from, the sun or the earth.

If we have desires other than desires to love and serve Kṛṣṇa, we will have to stay in this world in different bodies and on different planets until we are free from such desires, unless Kṛṣṇa gives us some special mercy. If, like the residents of the spiritual world, we only want to serve Kṛṣṇa in this life, then we can attain the spiritual world after death. Śrīla Prabhupāda was confident that if his disciples daily chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra sixteen times around their beads, trying to give up offenses to the holy name and living without meat-eating, intoxication, gambling, and illicit sex, they could become pure enough in heart to attain the spiritual world at the end of this life.

Who's Being Saved?

When reading about Kṛṣṇa and devotees, I often wonder how people in the world not fortunate enough to live the life of a devotee are seen by Kṛṣṇa? Are they saved? Also, how does someone who is sinful—not a thief or a murderer but not as pure as a total devotee in loving service to Kṛṣṇa—how do they fare with Kṛṣṇa if they chant only occasionally?

Nigel Sunderland
Bedfordshire, UK

Our reply: Kṛṣṇa sends His devotees all over the world to save people. Even if they just hear the devotees chanting the holy names, they are saved from the reactions to many sins. Furthermore, the holy name plants the seed of *bhakti* in their hearts, and the result will be that someday they will become devotees. As they take up the chanting of the holy names, the benefits gradually accumulate and they become more serious devotees. This happens more readily if they avoid offending devotees and the holy name. One especially dangerous offense is to chant with the desire to erase sinful reactions while continuing with one's sinful life.

The Charm Of the Uncharming

Why does this world look charming to everyone when it isn't actually charming?

Mukesh Singh
Via the Internet

Our reply: Kṛṣṇa has created the material world for a dual purpose: (1) to allow living entities to enjoy without a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and (2) to show them that such independent enjoyment will never satisfy them. Therefore it must appear charming and at the same time not be charming.

The material world is meant to attract people who do not want to serve the all-attractive person behind it. It is called *māyā,* or "that which is not." According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.1), even great sages and demigods are deluded by it. Kṛṣṇa describes in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14) that the delusion is very difficult to overcome and only those who surrender to Him can easily cross beyond it. It is meant to bewilder the atheistic, but if you follow Kṛṣṇa's instructions in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* you will not be bewildered by it, and then you can help others.

Proof for Scientists

I was speaking with a scientist friend who believes only what she can measure with her instruments. She refuses to believe in any proof of the existence of God, Kṛṣṇa. Can you give any direction so that I may engage her correctly in my explanation of the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Bruce Gatten
Via the Internet

Our reply: Most scientists don't have the time, knowledge, or instruments to replicate the experiments of other scientists and perceive the results through their own senses. They get their "proof" by accepting the conclusions of other scientists. In other words, they don't in fact believe only what they themselves perceive; they accept what others tell them.

Besides, spiritual facts are also perceivable. There is a spiritual science of consciousness described in the ancient Vedic literature of India. By practicing *bhakti-yoga,* we can perceive the Supreme Lord through our own senses. People have done this, and they teach how it can be done.

You cannot see an electron, but you rely on the experiments of others, who have detected them. Similarly, you cannot see God, but by relying on a self-realized soul, who can see God because he knows the process to do so and has followed it, you can know that God exists and know the process to personally experience Him. This is human life's special opportunity. If you do not take advantage of it, you are missing the most important knowledge—knowledge of consciousness and life itself.

Troubled

I want to know why trouble keeps coming my way.

Ebenezer
Via the Internet

Our reply: Kṛṣṇa explains that the material world is characterized by suffering and temporality (*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.15 and 9.33) and thus trouble is to be expected. We get misery from past sinful acts and happiness from past pious acts, and most people have a mixture of both. Devotional service to the Supreme Lord is so powerful, however, that as a side effect it reduces misery, even when performed in the practicing stage. Thus by engaging in devotional service, beginning with chanting the holy name of the Lord, you can reduce your miserable condition. When one attains love of God, miseries are fully eradicated, even in this world, or when one is promoted to the kingdom of God.

Replies to the questions were written by Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa.

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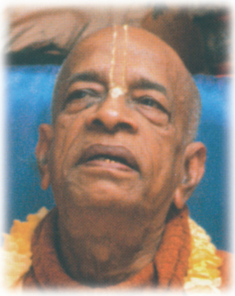
FOUNDER'S LECTURE
Melbourne—April 23, 1976

THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF EVERYTHING

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that He is everything
but everything is not Him.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ
jagad avyakta-mūrtinā
mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni
na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ

"By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them."
—*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.4

SOMETIMES people foolishly question, "Can you show me God?" Here God is giving the answer. *Mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam:* "I am everywhere. If you have eyes to see, you can see Me." God is everywhere; otherwise how can He be God? God means great, but we do not know how great He is. We simply say, "God is great," but we have no idea how God is great. That is explained in the Vedic literature: He is great because He is everywhere.

In the material world there are innumerable universes. You cannot count the stars and planets. Every night you see them, but can you count them? No, that is not possible. The universe in which our earth is situated is only one universe. Earth is a tiny planet, and it is one out of many millions of planets. We cannot even calculate everything about this one planet. That is the greatness of God's creation. You cannot count even your own hairs. You claim, "This is my hair." Can you count it? No. That is the greatness of God's creation. God is present everywhere, and everything is innumerable, beyond our counting capacity.

God is situated outside and inside. Otherwise, how can He be God? You are here, but you are not in your apartment. But God is in His apartment and He is everywhere. That is God.

Rascals claim, "I am God." What kind of God are you? Are you spread everywhere? We should not accept such a cheap "God."

God's description is there in the *śāstra,* the Vedic scriptures:

Left: The Bhagavad-gītā *and other scriptures reveal that everything ultimately traces back to Kṛṣṇa, the original form of God who captivates every other being, including His own expansions and incarnations.*

Detail from a painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

eko ’py asau racayituṁ jagad-
aṇḍa-koṭiṁ
yac-chaktir asti jagad-aṇḍa-cayā
yad-antaḥ
aṇḍāntara-stha-paramāṇu-
cayāntara-sthaṁ-
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ
bhajāmi

“He is an undifferentiated entity, as there is no distinction between potency and the possessor thereof. In His work of creation of millions of worlds, His potency remains inseparable. All the universes exist in Him, and He is present in His fullness in every one of the atoms that are scattered throughout the universe, at one and the same time. Such is the primeval Lord whom I adore.” [*Brahmā-saṁhitā* 5.35] One portion of God is the Paramātmā, the Supersoul. In His Supersoul feature God is present in innumerable universes. *Jagad-aṇḍa* means the universe. *Aṇḍa* means egg. The shape of the universe is like that of an egg. God maintains the millions and millions of universes by one portion of Himself, the Paramātmā, or Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. This is a great science. God expands Himself in so many ways, and for the material world He is expanded as the Puruṣa Avatāras: Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu.

> ***The pantheists think, “God is everywhere. Therefore there is no personal God.” No, that is foolish.***

Universes from God’s Breath

Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is lying within the Causal Ocean, and from His breathing the universes are coming out. This is God. Because He is in a sleeping condition, Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is an expansion of God. He is not the original God. The original God is Kṛṣṇa. But He can expand Himself. That is God.

Just have some idea what God is. As Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, He is sleeping within the ocean. As soon as there is a question of sleeping, there is breathing also. The bubbles that come out as He breathes are expanding as universes. When He exhales, innumerable universes come into form, and when He inhales, all of them become annihilated.

This is the nature of the material world: It comes into existence at a certain date, it remains for some time, it gives so many by-products, it expands, it dwindles, and then it is finished. Everything material follows this progression. Your body is like that, my body is like that, the whole universe is like that.

Here Kṛṣṇa says, *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam.* He is speaking of His impersonal expansion. When we cannot understand God, then we come first to the impersonal feature, or the idea that God is everywhere. In philosophical terms this is called pantheism. The pantheists think, “God is everywhere. Therefore there is no personal God.” No, that is foolish. *Mayā* means, “by Me.” Kṛṣṇa is saying, “By My energy I am expanded everywhere.”

This idea is similar to the sun and the sunshine; as soon as the sun is risen, the sunshine is expanded. The other day, while coming here, we saw how within a second the sun arose from the sea. Or it looked like that. Immediately, within a second, the whole world became illuminated. What is this illumination? It is the expansion of the sun as sunshine. But because the expansion is there that does not mean the sun globe is finished. The sun globe is there, and within the sun globe the sun god, or the predominating personality of the sun globe, is there. His name is also known to us. His name is Vivasvān.

In America the President’s name is Ford. Those who are intelligent know when they see him, “Oh, you are the President.” Similarly, each planet has a president, a chief person. And their names are recorded in the Vedic literature.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.1) you’ll find that millions of years ago Kṛṣṇa met the sun god and spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* to Him. *Imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān aham avyayam.* We have to take information from the right source. Then we are aware of everything.

How is God expanded everywhere? Take this example: According to the scientists, the sun is 93,000,000 miles away, and immediately, within a second, its sunshine is expanded all over the universe. So if this is possible for an ordinary material thing like the sun, just imagine God’s potency. Kṛṣṇa, God, is fully spiritual. How spiritually powerful He is that He can expand Himself all over the universes! This is a thoughtful consideration.

Where is the difficulty in understanding when Kṛṣṇa says, *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam:* “I am expanded everywhere”? There is no difficulty—if we are sane persons. We can see that in one universe there is one sun and it is so powerful, and there are innumerable universes and innumerable suns. How powerful must be the one who created all these suns! This calculation is common sense. If one sun, which is material, is so powerful that for millions and millions of years it is giving its energy—heat and light—and still it is so bright and powerful and its temperature is so high—then how powerful is God, the Creator. You can just imagine.

When Kṛṣṇa says, *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam*—“I pervade everything”—He is not speaking out of false pride. It is a fact. We simply must have the brain to understand. In every particle, every atom, there is the presence of God. That is stated in the *śāstra. Aṇḍāntara-stha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham* [*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.35]. *Paramāṇu* means the atom. God is within the atom. God is within you also. God is outside; God is within. Outside, we see the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. What are these five elements? Expansions of God's energy. We see practically that the sunshine is the cause of this universe. Within the sunshine all the planets have grown, and on each, due to the sunshine, the vegetables are growing. When there is no sunshine, the leaf falls down. As soon as the sunshine is there, the colorful fruits and flowers and leaves come out. Everything is due to the sunshine.

The Shining of God's Body

The supreme sun is Kṛṣṇa. God has His effulgence—the shining of His body. That is called the *brahmajyoti.* From the *brahmajyoti* innumerable universes are generated. Therefore God is the cause of all creation. He doesn't have to personally manufacture each universe. He is so powerful that in His effulgence, in His shining, innumerable universes are created. And in each universe there are many millions and millions of stars and planets.

These are the descriptions in the Vedic literature, from which we have to learn these things. You cannot speculate by your tiny effort, with limited power and perception. You have to understand from authoritative statements. That is called *Veda. Veda* means perfect knowledge, and if you study the *Vedas,* then you get perfect knowledge of everything. And the cream of the Vedic knowledge is here in the *Bhagavad-gītā.* If you read *Bhagavad-gītā* carefully, then you get all the knowledge perfectly.

Here Kṛṣṇa is speaking of His impersonal expansion. You cannot see God in person in this expansion. Sometimes people foolishly ask, "Can you show me God?" God is there. You have to make your eyes qualified to see Him. For example, God is here in the temple, but somebody is thinking, "This is not God. This is a statue or an idol. They are worshiping an idol." Supposing it is an idol, if God is everywhere, why is He not in the idol? What is the argument? If God is everywhere, then why is He not the idol? God has that power. And actually this is not an idol. This is God's energy.

Three Energies of God

The same example: The sunshine is everywhere, so originally the sunshine is the cause of everything. Similarly, God's effulgence is the cause of material things also. That is explained in the Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā.* God's energies have been summarized as three: external energy, internal energy, and marginal energy. The external energy is this material manifestation. Similarly, there is an internal energy: the spiritual world manifestation. And in between them there is another energy, called the marginal energy, *taṭasthā.*

We living entities are the marginal energy. That means we can live either in this external energy or in the internal energy. At the present moment we are living in the external energy. But this external energy is also Lord Kṛṣṇa's energy, God's energy. It is not different from Him. We are captivated by the external energy. But the external energy is not permanent. The internal energy is permanent. The spiritual world is permanent, and we are also permanent.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to transfer oneself from the external energy to the internal energy. That is the purpose of all Vedic literature. *Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ* [*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15]. To understand God and go back home, back to Godhead, is the perfection of life. Here, we are in God's energy. There is no doubt. *Mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni:* "All living

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

beings are in Me." *Bhūtāni* means all living entities, anything that has grown. The trees, the plants, the hills, the ocean, the sky—everything is resting on God's energy.

Na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ: "I am not in them." It is not as the pantheists think. They think, "If God has expanded in everything, then whatever I worship is worship of God." No. Kṛṣṇa says, "No, you cannot take it like that."

The same example: The sunshine is not different from the sun, but because the sunshine has entered your room, that does not mean the sun has entered your room. If you try to understand, then you'll understand that God is everywhere but, still, He is not everywhere. This is His inconceivable power.

Therefore, if we want to worship God, then we have to worship His name, form, qualities, pastimes, and so on. Then we shall realize that God is a person, the Supreme Being, and that He has all the propensities we have. Because we are part and parcel of God, we can study God's personality from our personality, just as we can study the father by the symptoms of the son. This is a crude example. Whatever propensities we have, where are they coming from? They are coming from God.

Therefore in the *Vedānta-sūtra* (1.1.2) it is said, *janmādy asya yataḥ:* "Everything is emanating from God." The original source of everything is God. So by studying ourselves we can study the nature of God. The difference is only that He is huge, the greatest, and we are small particles, but the qualities are the same. Take a drop of ocean water. The chemical composition is the same as the ocean's. The taste is the same. Similarly, we are a small sample of God, but God is great. That is the difference between a living entity and God.

If we understand this philosophy, then it is not difficult to understand God, and then we can reestablish our original relationship with Him. And if we act accordingly, then our life is successful.

Thank you very much.

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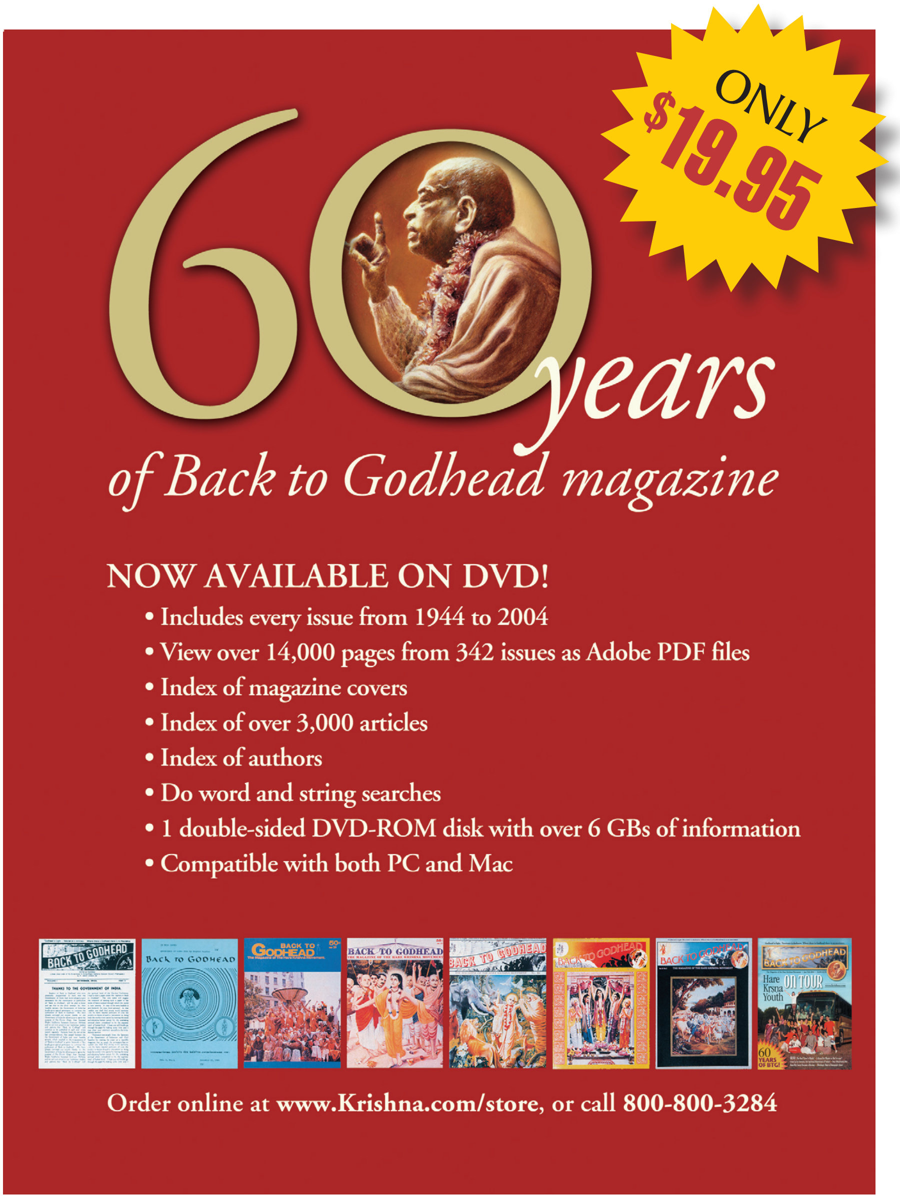

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Glossary

Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to his friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the A
ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (
and ignorance) that hold sway over all act
material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to him with devotion (literally "mercy").

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and his devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

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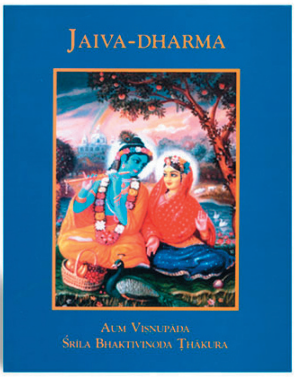
The Eternal Religion

A great teacher in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line explains the unchangeable nature of the soul.

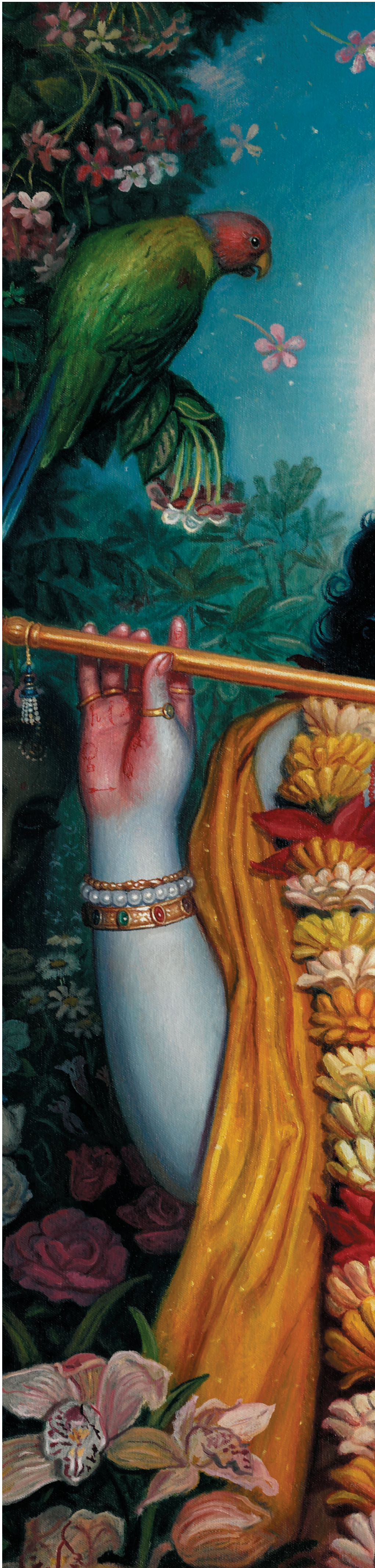
by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

In the form of a novel entitled Jaiva-dharma, *Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (see sidebar: About the Author) presented the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in great detail. The following is taken from Chapter One, entitled "Nitya-dharma, the Eternal Nature of the Living Entity, and Naimittika-dharma, His Impermanent Religious Duties." Translated from Bengali by Sarvabhāvana Dāsa.*



SANNYĀSĪ ṬHĀKURA: "Dear master! Wherever I have been, I have heard *paṇḍitas* expound the importance of *dharma,* religious duty, and, in response, I have always enquired what *dharma* actually is in truth. However, the sad fact is that all the answers I have received are varied and contradictory. Therefore, now, from you, I would like to know—what is the true *dharma* of mankind? Why does each of the different religious teachers preach his particular version of *dharma* as being the only true religion? If there actually is but one *dharma,* then why are the numerous religious leaders not in agreement and so following that singular spiritual path?"

Bābājī Mahārāja quietly began his dissertation while worshiping the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu within his mind. "O fortunate one! Listen attentively as I explain to you man's true religion, his *nitya-dharma.* The natural characteristics of a *vastu,* eternal entity or substance, are related to its *ghaṭana,* intrinsic constitution. By

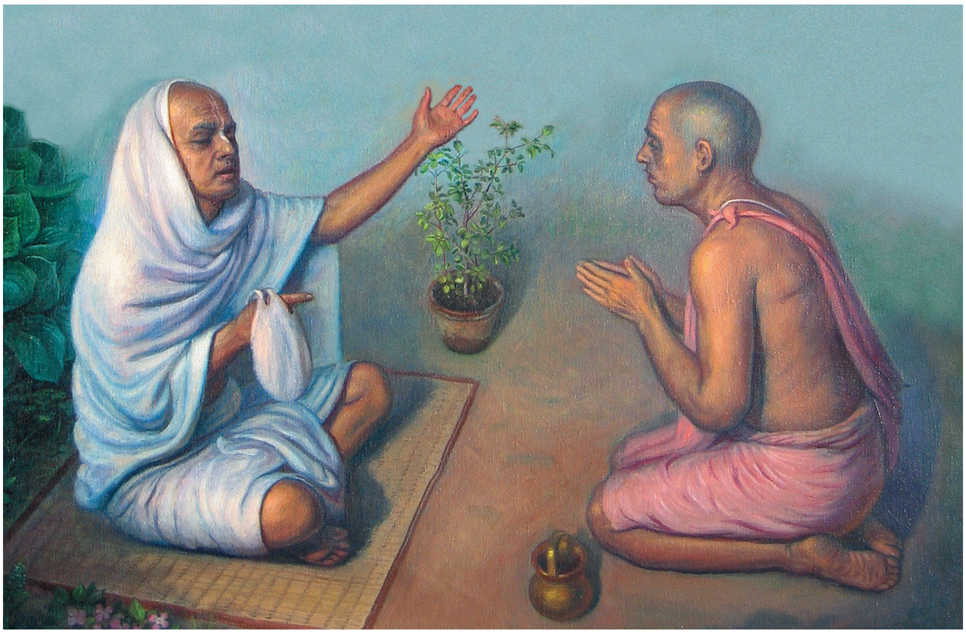


Right: When we remove all temporary conceptions of the self, what remains is the pure living being as an eternal servant of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Painting by Sat-cid-ānanda Dāsa

the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a *vastu,* once brought into existence, inherently possesses a permanent nature—known as its *dharma.* Thus, the innate nature is the *nitya-dharma* of the *vastu.*

“However, by force of circumstance, or by contact with other substances, the original character of the *vastu* may apparently be transformed. In the course of time, when this transformed character becomes stable, it then appears to be a seemingly permanent quality of the *vastu*—apparently being the genuine original, eternal and immanent nature. Nevertheless, this new distorted character is not the actual *svabhāva,* inherent nature. Actually, this new character is defined as *nisarga,* a condition that only appears to be natural. Appearing to be eternal, the *nisarga* deceptively usurps the actual *svabhāva* of the *vastu.*


Detail from a painting by Sat-cid-ānanda Dāsa

Bābājī Mahārāja explains the soul’s nature to Sannyāsī Ṭhākura.

“Let us take, for example, the substance water. Liquidity is its inherent nature. However, when water freezes to ice, solidity becomes its assumed nature—its *nisarga. Nisarga* is a temporary condition because it is brought about by an agent acting as a catalyst. When the agent is removed, the false temporary *nisarga* also disappears; whereas, conversely, the true inherent nature is maintained eternally. Even if the *vastu* apparently transforms, the *nitya-dharma* remains its intrinsic nature, latent within the seemingly changed *vastu,* and by the amelioration of the alien circumstances the *nitya-dharma* will, in time, surely reassert itself.

“The inherent nature, the *svabhāva,* is the eternal religion of a *vastu*—the *nitya-dharma.* In contrast, the assumed nature of a *vastu*—the *nisarga*—is its *naimittika-dharma,* temporary nature. One who possesses *vastu-jñāna,* knowledge of the Absolute Reality, is able to discriminate between *nitya-dharma* and *naimittika-dharma,* which takes the form of temporary, material, religious performance. However, without this knowledge, a person will falsely consider the temporary *nisarga* and resultant *naimittika-dharma* to be the *nitya-dharma.*

Sannyāsī Ṭhākura then asked, “Kindly further elucidate the definitions of *vastu* and *svabhāva*?”

Bābājī Mahārāja answered, “The Sanskrit word *vastu* is a derivative of the root *vas*—which means ‘to exist’ or ‘to dwell’—conjugated and made into a noun by the suffix *tu.* Therefore, *vastu* means ‘that which exists being self-evident and perceivable.’ *Vastu* is of two kinds: *vāstava-vastu* and *avāstava-vastu. Vāstava-vastu* is transcendental truth—eternal spiritual substance. *Avāstava-vastu* is matter—temporary objects possessing inert qualities, having but an illusory semblance of the actual eternal reality. The existence of *vāstava-vastu* is absolute, transcendental reality wherein the manifested attributes are a display of the actual intrinsic nature—the *nitya-dharma.* The *jīva* is an element of transcendental *vāstava-vastu,* and the *jīva’s* intrinsic nature is his *nitya-dharma,* permanent, inherent characteristic.

“It is a matter of perception. Perception of the intrinsic *dharma* is at times accurate and, at other times, illusory. The statement of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* 1.1.2: . . . *vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivādam* . . . ‘The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the benefit of all,’ assures us that *vāstava-vastu* decisively denotes spiritual, transcendental truth. Ultimately, the Supreme Personality of Godhead alone is that *vāstava-vastu,* the truly abiding substance. The *jīva* is a fractional part of that *vāstava-vastu,* and *māyā*—the external potency that produces illusion—is His energy. Therefore, *vastu* indicates the Supreme Lord, the *jīva,* and *māyā*—all three principles together. Proper comprehension of the relationships amongst these principles is *śuddha-jñāna,* true knowledge.

“There are various conceptions about these three principles, but almost all of them are illusory and mundane. For instance, in the Vaiśeṣika school of thought, the argumentation and classification of *dravya,* objects, and their *guṇa,* qualities, are based entirely upon their *avāstava-vastu,* temporary nature.”

Sannyāsī Ṭhākura continued,

"Master, I would like to have a better grasp of this subject."

Bābājī Mahārāja answered, "Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is a most elevated saint who has received the direct mercy of Śrī Nityānanda. He once showed me a handwritten manuscript, entitled *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* which contains the deliberations of Śrī Caitanya upon this topic. In the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā,* Chapter 20, verses 108 and 117, there is the following statement:

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya-kṛṣṇera 'nitya-
dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-
prakāśa'

"'The *nitya-dharma* of the *jīva* is to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa because he is the *taṭasthā-śakti,* marginal energy, of Kṛṣṇa and thus a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord.'

kṛṣṇa bhuli' sei jīva anādi-
bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsāra-
duḥkha

"'Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the *jīva* has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore, *māyā,* the illusory energy, gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.'

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *cit-vastu,* the wholly and absolutely spiritual entity. When describing Him, many persons use the analogy of the sun: He is the only sun of the spiritual world, and the *jīvas* are the innumerable particles of His rays. The *jīva* is an infinitesimal part of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it would be an inaccurate parallel to compare the *jīva* to a rock, which is a minute part of a gigantic mountain, because the countless millions of *jīvas* who emanate from Śrī Kṛṣṇa do not in any way affect or diminish the absolute wholeness of the Lord. Therefore, the *Vedas* compare the Supreme Lord to a fire and the *jīvas* to the tiny sparks of that fire.

"Actually, no comparison is truly appropriate. Whether the *jīva* is described as a tiny spark of a fire, a minute particle of a sunray, or a speck of gold from a gold mine, none of these comparisons is actually perfect. Nevertheless, if one can overlook the mundane imperfections in these analogies, then the actual truth about the *jīva* will easily crystallize: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the infinite spiritual substance, while the *jīva* is His infinitesimal part and parcel and therefore also a spiritual substance. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *jīva* are qualitatively the same, being of the same spiritual nature.

"However, the Supreme Lord is *bṛhat-cit-vastu,* the complete, infinite, spiritual entity, whereas the *jīva* is *anu-cit-vastu,* the infinitesimal spiritual entity, the Lord's part and parcel. Although they are one in the quality of their spiritual nature and consciousness, this contrast of quantity between the Lord and the *jīva* is a permanent feature of their natures. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *jīva's* eternal master and the *jīva* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant. This is their natural constitutional relationship. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme ruler and observer; the *jīva* is the ruled and observed. Kṛṣṇa is the independently omnipotent Supreme Controller, and the *jīva's* potency is dependent and controlled. Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole; the *jīva* is a minutely tiny part. With His infinitely superior opulence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the all-attractive person, who thereby attracts all the *jīvas* to Himself. Therefore, it is natural for the *jīva* to be in Kṛṣṇa-dāsya, eternal subservience to Kṛṣṇa, this being the *jīva's svabhāva* and thus his *dharma.*

> ***"With His infinitely superior opulence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the all-attractive person, who attracts all the jīvas to Himself."***

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of unlimited energies. For instance, to manifest the spiritual world the Lord displays the *antaraṅga-śakti,* which is His *pūrṇa-śakti,* full-blown internal potency. Similarly, to create the *jīvas* and carry out the other tasks involved in the organization of this imperfect material cosmos, He employs another of His energies, the *taṭasthā-śakti.* By nature, the material and spiritual energies are diametrically opposed and are therefore incompatible. The *taṭasthā śakti,* however, creates an entity that can interact with both the material and the spiritual natures.

"The *taṭa-rekhā,* the marginal line lying between the water of a river and its bank, is both water and land, being situated where the two meet. Since, in this case, the divine *taṭasthā-śakt*i is situated at the margin of matter and spirit, it displays the characteristics of both matter and spirit—it is one principle, yet it displays two natures. The *jīva* is a spiritual spark, a product of the higher spiritual nature, yet, being the divine *taṭasthā-śakti,* the *jīva* has a nature that enables him to relate to the mundane material energy and be always prone to coming under her influence. Thus, on one hand, the *jīva* cannot be wholly likened to the pure spiritual nature, which is transcendental to and entirely beyond the influence of the material nature. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the *jīva* cannot be categorized as material since, by his intrinsic constitution, he is spiritual. Therefore, being an entity with innate characteristics different from both matter and pure spirit, the *jīva* receives a separate designation as the *jīva-tattva,* the *jīva* principle. In this respect, one must accept the eternal distinction between the Supreme Lord and the *jīva.*

"Bhagavān, the Īśvara, is the

supreme master and controller of *māyā,* who is fully subservient to His will. In contrast, the *jīva* is prone to come under the influence of *māyā;* at any time, the *jīva* may be forced to submit to the dictates of *māyā.* Therefore, all these three principles—*īśvara, jīva* and *māyā*—are mutually distinct eternal realities.

"Amongst them, the Supreme Lord is described in the *Śrī Kaṭhopaniṣad,* 2.2.13, as:

nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānām

"'The Supreme Lord is the one supreme eternal entity amongst all eternal entities and the fundamental conscious being amongst all conscious beings.'

"Thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is declared the ultimate eternal cause of all three entities—*īśvara, jīva,* and *māyā.* Constitutionally, the *jīva* is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa and the direct manifestation of His *taṭasthā-śakti.* From this analysis, we can conclude that the *jīva* is the *bhedābheda prakāśa* manifestation of Bhagavān, simultaneously one with and different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *jīva* may be subject to the domination of *māyā,* while the Supreme Lord is eternally the controller of *māyā*—herein dwells an eternal difference between the *jīva* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *jīva* is one of the Supreme Lord's divine energies; thus, the *jīva's* constitutional nature is spiritual, just as the Supreme Godhead is intrinsically spiritual. In this respect, the *jīva* and the Supreme Lord are non-different. However, the *jīva* and the Supreme Lord are simultaneously non-different and different, and the concept of eternal difference may be seen to predominate.

"Servitorship to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *nitya-dharma* of the *jīva,* and when the *jīva,* somehow or other, turns away from Kṛṣṇa, this change of attitude is tantamount to rejection of the Lord and His service. From the point of this occurrence, the *jīva* is subject to the domination of *māyā* because of his neglectful ignorance and consequent forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord. Furthermore, upon thus entering the material world, the *jīva* brings with him no historical record of this fall as this fall originates outside the purview of material time, thus justifying the use of the phrase *anādi-bahirmukha,* beginninglessly—in terms of material time—turned away from the spiritual realm.

"Serving Kṛṣṇa is the *nitya-dharma* of the *jīva,* and the instant the *jīva* neglects and forgets this truth his eternal nature becomes perverted and progressively enslaved by *māyā.* In contact with *māyā,* he develops a mundane nature, his *nisarga,* paving the way for *naimittika-dharma,* which are the impermanent religious duties dictated by material contact. *Nitya-dharma,* the eternal religious activity born from the inherent nature of the *jīva,* is complete and pure in itself—it is constant and flawless. *Naimittika-dharma,* on the contrary, appears in many diverse forms under the varying material circumstances and when expounded upon by the less-enlightened men of conflicting opinions." Abruptly, Bābājī Mahārāja fell silent and began to chant upon his beads. Sannyāsī Ṭhākura, who had been listening keenly throughout the discussion, now offered his prostrate obeisances to Bābājī Mahārāja, saying, "Master, today I will meditate on your esoteric teachings. Tomorrow I will return with whatever queries I may have and present them at your lotus feet." ❀

Sarvabhāvana Dāsa (the translator) is from Kolkata and was initiated in 1975 by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who directed him to translate works of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line into English. His translations include Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi, Śrī Manaḥ Śikṣā, Śrī Daśa-mūla-tattva, *and* Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata.

Jaiva-dharma *is available from the Krishna.com store, as well as from the publisher (kesidamana.acbsp@pamho.net).*

About the Author

IN THE CLOSING days of the nineteenth century, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura reestablished the teachings of Lord Caitanya, which by then had been largely misrepresented or lost. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote almost one hundred books to explain the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, expose pseudo incarnations of God, and defeat misconceptions about the path of devotional service. He was the deputy magistrate for Jagannatha Puri, Orissa, as well as the father of ten children.

One of his sons was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who said, "Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura happens to be . . . one of the *ācāryas.* And he has left behind him many books—*Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, Jaiva-dharma.* These are very important books. They're in Bengali, in Sanskrit. . . . So we are trying to present Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's books also in English translation. Gradually you will get them."

Meat-Eating And Nature's Law

This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and guests took place in December, 1968, at the Los Angeles Hare Kṛṣṇa temple.

Guest: If man didn't eat animals, they'd probably just die of starvation or something.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why are you so anxious about the animals' dying of starvation? Take care of yourself. Don't be altruistic—"Oh, they will starve. Let me eat them." What is this altruism? Kṛṣṇa is supplying food. If an animal dies of starvation, it is Kṛṣṇa's responsibility. Nobody dies of starvation. That is a false theory. Have you seen any animal dying of starvation? Have you got any experience? Have you seen any bird dying of starvation? There is no question of starvation in the kingdom of God. We are manufacturing these theories for our own sense satisfaction. . . . There are millions of elephants in the African jungle and Indian jungle. They require one hundred pounds at a time to eat. Who is supplying food? So there is no question of starvation in the kingdom of God. Starvation is for the so-called civilized man.

Guest: If man wasn't meant to eat meat, why in nature do the other animals kill meat?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Are you "another animal"?

Guest: Well, we're all animals.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You count yourself among the animals? You classify yourself with the animals?

Guest: Well, we're all animals . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, not all. You may be, but we are not. Do you like to be classified with the animals?

Guest: I don't feel that I am better than the animals. I have respect for all God's creatures.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have respect for all, and you kill animals?

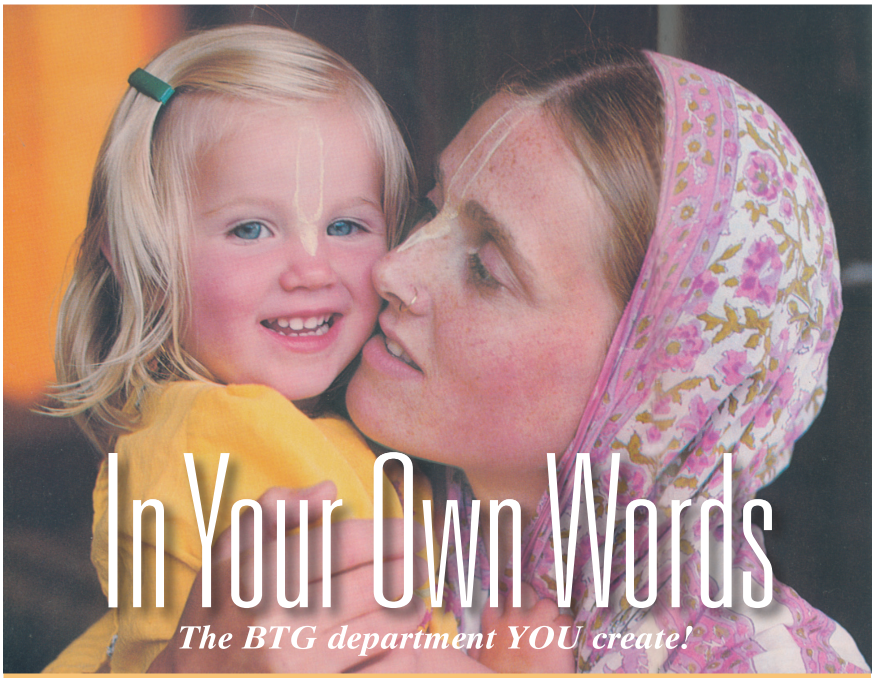
Guest: Well, why is it—if man is not meant to eat meat—that in nature the animals eat each other?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When animals eat meat, they are following nature's law. When you eat meat, you are breaking nature's law.

Guest: What?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: For instance, a tiger will never come to claim the grain. "Oh, you've got so much grain—give me some." No. Even if there are hundreds of bags of grain, he doesn't care. But he'll pounce upon an animal. That is his natural instinct. But why do you take grain, fruit, milk, meat, and whatever you get? What is this? You are neither animal nor human being. You are misusing your humanity. You should think, "What is eatable for me?"

A tiger may eat meat—he is a tiger. But I am not a tiger; I am a human. If I've got enough grain, fruit, vegetables, and other things God has given, why should I go to kill a poor animal? This is humanity. You are animal plus human. If you forget your humanity, then you are an animal. [A brief silence.] So we are not simply animals. We are animal plus human. If we increase our quality of humanity, then our life is perfect. But if we remain in animality, then our life is imperfect. We have to increase our human consciousness—that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you can live very peacefully, very nicely, in good health by eating so many varieties of foodstuffs given by Kṛṣṇa, why should you kill an animal?



In Your Own Words

The BTG department YOU create!

Your replies to this question will appear in our May/June issue. (Deadline for submissions: February 15.)

What's the best Kṛṣṇa conscious lesson you've learned from someone else?

Describe the situation, what you learned, why it meant so much to you, and the person you learned it from. This does not have to be a guru, *sannyāsī,* or other ISKCON leader. It could be your mother or father, a friend, the newly-joined Bhakta Bob, or your two-year-old toddler. Anyone can turn out to be an unexpected spiritual teacher.

Go to Krishna.com/inyourownwords and let us know.
(Please keep your answer to under 150 words.)

Besides that, scientifically, your teeth are meant for eating vegetables. The tiger has teeth for eating meat. Nature has made it like that. He has to kill another animal; therefore he has nails, he has teeth, he has strength. But you have no such strength. You cannot kill a cow like that—pouncing like a tiger. You have to make a slaughterhouse and sit down at your home. . . . If somebody else slaughters the cow, you can eat very nicely. . . . What is this? Do like the tiger! Pounce upon a cow and eat! But you cannot do that.

Guest: So you don't believe in nature's law. I believe nature's law applies equally to everybody.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The tiger is made by nature's law in that way, so therefore he can do that. You cannot do it—your nature is different. You have discrimination, you have conscience, you are claiming to be a civilized human being—so you should utilize all this. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, perfect consciousness. Human life is meant for raising oneself to the perfection of consciousness, and that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We cannot remain in tiger consciousness. That is not humanity.

Another Guest: Have we fallen from higher to lower, or have we come up from plants and animals?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, naturally you have fallen from higher to lower—from the spiritual world to this material world, and then down to the lower species. Then you

Yamarāja Dāsa

IN MEMORIAM

His Holiness Śrīpāda Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami passed from this world on the holy day Vijaya Daśamī, October 2, 2006. Śrīla Śrīpāda ("one who gives Kṛṣṇa"), as he was affectionately known, was born in a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava family in Manipur, India. He was a *naiṣṭika brahmacārī* (lifelong celibate) who grew up absorbed in Manipuri culture, which is heavily focused on the *rāsa-līlā,* Lord Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes with His cowherd girlfriends. Śrīla Śrīpāda was known as a very dear disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda whose presence always made Śrīla Prabhupāda happy.

Śrīla Śrīpāda received a Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry from the University of California, Irvine. Because of his scientific and Vaiṣṇava backgrounds, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him to start the Bhaktivedanta Institute to make scientific presentations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Metanexus Institute, the world's largest science and spirituality organization, considered him one of the world's leading thinkers in the field of science and religion. He also founded the Ranganiketan Manipuri Cultural Arts Troupe for cultural presentations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as per Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions to him. Śrīla Śrīpāda was also a global council member of The United Religions Initiative, the largest interfaith organization in the world.

He left this world while meditating on the *rāsa-līlā* of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The scriptures tell us that one who passes away in such consciousness is eligible to enter the Lord's pastimes. His saintly body was entombed at the most holy place of Sri Radha-kund, India.

A feature article on his life will appear in the next issue of *Back to Godhead.*

make progress, and you again come to this human form. If you utilize your higher consciousness, then you go still higher: you go to God. But if you don't use your higher consciousness, you again go down. So don't be misguided. Take to God consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and that will be proper use of this human form of life.

Otherwise, if we indulge in meat-eating, like a tiger, we may get the body of tiger in our next life, but what is the use? Suppose I become a very strong tiger my next life. Is that a very good promotion? Do you know the life of a tiger? They cannot even eat daily. They pounce upon one animal and keep it secretly, and for a month they eat the decomposed flesh—because they don't always get the chance to kill an animal. God will not give that chance. It is natural: in the jungle wherever there is a tiger the other animals flee. Self-defense. So on rare occasions, when the tiger is too hungry, then God gives him a chance to pounce upon another animal. A tiger cannot get so many palatable dishes daily. It is in the human form of life that we have all these facilities. But if we misuse them, then . . . go to the tiger life. Be very strong, with full pouncing capacity.

When Does Food Become Prasādam?

With proper guidance, anyone can turn ordinary food into a spiritual substance.

by Śivarāma Swami

Yamarāja Dāsa

This may look like ordinary food,

THE PHENOMENON of something changing from material to spiritual is an extraordinary one, but it is something we as devotees are involved in daily—often several times a day. It happens when *bhoga* (unoffered food) becomes *prasādam,* or food sanctified by the Lord.

When I was a new devotee in Montreal, we arranged a program that was to be given on campus at McGill University. The leaflet advertising the program read, "See matter transformed into spirit before your very eyes." That title certainly drew interest from a lot of people.

During the program, the temple president was giving the presentation, and he was leading up to this point. Finally he said, "OK, now it's about to happen. You are going to see spirit manifest before your very eyes."

The students were sitting on the edge of their seats. The plate of unoffered food, which was the feast for that day, was brought in and placed in front of a picture of Pañca-tattva (Lord Caitanya and His four main associates). A devotee then bowed down, rang the bell, and uttered some mantras.

Finally he stood and declared, "Here it is! We brought in ordinary food, and now it's transformed into spiritual substance."

And before anyone could challenge, he said, "The proof will be that you eat it now and see the effect that it has."

As Kṛṣṇa says, *pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyam:* "The principle of religion is understood by direct experience." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.2), or in this case, the proof is certainly in the tasting. Those who have tasted Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam* know that it has extraordinary potency, and eating it is a very different experience from eating food that isn't offered to the Lord with love and devotion.

So when does *bhoga* become *prasādam*? When it is offered, certainly. But for an offering to be successful, it must be accepted. When Kṛṣṇa accepts what we offer to Him, it becomes *prasādam.* The word *prasādam* means "mercy," and in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *prasāde sarva-duḥkhānāṁ hānir asyopajāyate:* "Receiving the mercy of the Lord destroys all misery." Therefore, when we eat (or, as we say, honor) *prasādam,* we feel elated. *Prasādam* destroys the results of our past sinful activities. Rūpa Gosvāmī says it makes us feel "very auspicious."

And what is it that is really being accepted? Is it the food itself? Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26),

patraṁ puṣpam phalaṁ toyaṁ
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ

but because it has been prepared for Kṛṣṇa and offered to Him with love, it has been transformed into spiritual energy.

"If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." He says, "I accept the *bhakti.*" You may offer a leaf, a flower, fruit, milk, or ghee-cooked preparations, but the devotion is what carries those preparations to Kṛṣṇa, and that's what makes Him inclined to accept it. *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* (Mantra 5) tells us, *tad dūre tad v antike:* although Kṛṣṇa is very far away, He is also very close. So wherever we are when we offer something to Kṛṣṇa, devotion brings Him right to us.

But not all offerings are on the same level; they depend on the nature of the devotee. Although there are many ways to categorize devotees, in this case we may consider three types: motivated, pure, and love-saturated devotees. Consequently, their offerings will fall into one of these three categories.

The Motivated Offering

A motivated offering is when something is offered to Kṛṣṇa with the idea that some material benefit will come in return, such as liberation from material suffering: "If I give this to Kṛṣṇa, I'll be prosperous, I'll be healthy, my children will find suitable spouses," and so on. Or someone might desire to be free from suffering, or to recover from an illness—this is offering with motivation. But even that motivated offering can be done in two ways. If it is done through the *guru-paramparā,* the succession of gurus, then Kṛṣṇa will accept it, because pure devotees are very merciful, and to elevate motivated devotees they beseech Kṛṣṇa to accept their meager offerings. In other words, it is the purity of the devotees in the *guru-paramparā* that transforms the impure offering into a pure offering. If a motivated person just makes an offering whimsically, however, not through a *guru-paramparā,* then the offering doesn't become *prasādam* but remains *bhoga.* Yet still such offerings have value in the sense that the person is thinking, "At least I am offering this to Kṛṣṇa."

It is the purity of the devotees in the guru-paramparā that transforms the impure offering into a pure offering.

Of course, whatever way people think of Kṛṣṇa is beneficial. *Akāma, sarva-kāma, mokṣa-kāma*: without material desires, full of material desires, or desiring liberation. In each case they become gradually purified. But unless Kṛṣṇa exercises some extraordinary mercy, He doesn't accept food offered with ulterior motives. *Yasyāprasādan na gatiḥ kuto 'pi:* "Without the grace of the spiritual master one cannot make any advancement." (*Gurvaṣṭaka* 8) Kṛṣṇa won't accept something unless it comes through the *guru-paramparā.*

An interesting question often arises regarding congregation members or new devotees who are not initiated but who are making offerings: Are the offerings *prasādam* or *bhoga*? In this case we should consider the potency of the disciplic succession. The disciplic succession is not restricted to initiated devotees. If someone receives an instruction from an authorized Vaiṣṇava to offer food, then Kṛṣṇa will accept their offering. Kṛṣṇa won't reject their sincere approach, because such persons are, in effect, accepting the *guru-paramparā* even though they have not yet gone through the process of *dīkṣā.*

The Pure Offering

The second type of offering is the pure offering, when a devotee offers something to Kṛṣṇa to please Him. A devotee has no selfish motives; he only wants to please the Lord. Therefore at home he offers food to a picture, to a deity, to a *śālagrāma-śilā*. And in the temple, pure-hearted *pūjārīs* try to please Gaura-Nitāi and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. But even in this category there are two types of offerings: regulated and spontaneous. Regulated offerings are done out of duty, following all the rules and regulations. The other also involves the devotee doing everything just right, but out of a spontaneous attachment to the Lord. Such a devotee has a certain degree of affection, and the dominant thought is not one of obligation—"I will do this because I've been instructed to by guru and *śāstra*." Yet by doing things according to guru and *śāstra,* devotees awaken their natural attraction to Kṛṣṇa and perform spontaneous acts of devotion out of affection. This affection is a little different from mature love, spiritual love, but it is genuine. Still, both these pure offerings have to be made through the *guru-paramparā.*

The *prasādam* is also different in this category. When you offer something to Kṛṣṇa out of duty, He accepts it out of duty. He feels duty-bound. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.24) Kṛṣṇa says, "If I didn't follow the rules and regulations, then other people would be misled." Kṛṣṇa is acting out of duty. But Kṛṣṇa considers that of all the devotees who are surrendered to Him, the one who offers things to Him with affection is most dear to Him. Consequently, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates in kind: He responds with loving affection toward that devotee.

Naturally the question arises, Are there different kinds of *prasādam*? And the answer, then, is yes. Kṛṣṇa says, *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham:* "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." (Bg. 4.11) According to the quality and quantity of devotion with which one makes an offering to Kṛṣṇa, that offering proportionately becomes *prasādam.* It is interesting to note that a devotee's ability to taste *prasādam* will also be in proportion to his or her ability to offer *prasādam.* In other words, devotees will taste the spiritual nature of *prasādam* in the same degree they are manifesting devotion in the offering.

The Offering in Pure Love

The third kind of offering is that which is done with pure love. When devotees come to the stage of loving devotion, Kṛṣṇa directly accepts offerings from their hands and He reciprocates with them in kind. Loving devotion is that which is exhibited by Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates in the spiritual world, where He is directly engaged in tasting all the types of love His devotees offer.

So what is it that's different, and how is it that *prasādam* becomes spiritual? The food looks the same before and after the offering, but what actually happens is that Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with the devotion of the devotee by manifesting His *svarūpa-śakti*, or His *daivī-prakṛti*, His internal spiritual potency, to the degree that the devotee allows. By "allows" I mean to the degree the devotee wants, or to the degree that he manifests a quality and quantity of devotional service. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu was in Jagannatha Puri and tasted Jagannātha *prasādam,* He became overwhelmed by the ecstatic taste of the *prasādam.* He glorified the *prasādam* and could directly taste the saliva of Kṛṣṇa's lotus lips mixed in with the food. He went on to glorify the effect of the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lips.

This is what happens when someone in loving devotion tastes food that has been offered to the Lord. And in this case, no doubt, Caitanya Mahāprabhu's ability to taste the potency of the *prasādam* exceeds that of the *brāhmaṇas* who offered it to Lord Jagannātha. But still, that *prasādam* is Kṛṣṇa's internal potency. It is non-different from Kṛṣṇa, and it is dynamic. A loving devotee may taste more of the spiritual potency present in *prasādam* than was originally manifest to the *pūjārī* who offered it.

We may also consider the examples of Prahlāda Mahārāja and Mīrābāi: Both were given poison to drink, but because of their great loving devotion, the poison was transformed into nectar and had no effect. Why is that? Because both poison and nutritious food are part of the relativity of this material world. But when we offer something with love to Kṛṣṇa, then Kṛṣṇa's *sac-cid-ānanda* potency manifests in that food. In this way, poison becomes as much *prasādam* as a *pakora* does.

Offering Our Lives

We shouldn't think, however, that an "offering" is simply the *bhoga* or food we offer to Kṛṣṇa. Devotees make their entire life an offering:

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam

Kṛṣṇa is saying, "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform—do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me." (Bg. 9.27) Ultimately every breath a devotee takes is an offering: when devotees sleep because they need to maintain their bodies for Kṛṣṇa's service, then that sleep becomes an offering to the Lord; their eating to maintain their bodies so they can remain healthy to serve Kṛṣṇa is an offering to the Lord; when they receive anything—food, soap, money—all of these things are offered to Kṛṣṇa. In New Vraja Dhama (the devotee farm community in Hungary) anything the devotees acquire or receive, they first offer to Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, the presiding deities, on a tray that sits before the altar. In this way the practice of offering everything to Kṛṣṇa becomes natural.

We should learn how to offer everything. We rise early in the morning, and the first thing we do is offer prayers to the Lord. We chant Hare Kṛṣṇa not as entertainment but as an offering to glorify Kṛṣṇa. And when someone lives like that, then in one sense the act of making the offering becomes unnecessary (although devotees do it to set

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the example) because such devotees are always absorbed in doing everything for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, *yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*—the *bhakti* is already there, and Kṛṣṇa is very eager to receive it. In fact, Kṛṣṇa follows behind devotees to accept their loving devotion every moment of the day, in every movement of their bodies, and in every thought they manifest in relation to their devotional service to Him.

Ultimately this is what we aspire for, and this is what loving devotees do: they live for Kṛṣṇa, and thus everything they do becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious—it becomes *prasādam.* The cowherd boys simply sit down with Kṛṣṇa and eat from their lunch packs—they don't make any offering to Kṛṣṇa. When they offer something to Kṛṣṇa, they take from their lunch packs and put it right in Kṛṣṇa's mouth. Or they may even bite off half a sweetball and then say, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa, just see how wonderful this sweetball tastes!" and put the rest in Kṛṣṇa's mouth. *Yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*: it's just their love. The formality and technicality of offering is no longer relevant, because what Kṛṣṇa really wants is the love and devotion. That's all that actually interests Him. And whether Mother Yaśodā offers her breast milk, the *gopīs* offer their bodies, the cows offer their milk, the cowherd boys wrestle and jump on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders—everything becomes *prasādam* because everything is an offering of love.

Our business in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, therefore, is to live in this world of *prasādam* and thereby become *prasādam* ourselves. This is what Kṛṣṇa concludes in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.24) when He says, *brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam* . . . : "A person who is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities." If we're thinking about offering everything to Kṛṣṇa, if our physical acts are an offering to Kṛṣṇa, if our words are an offering to Kṛṣṇa, then ultimately we become an offering to Kṛṣṇa. Then we become *prasādam.* And Kṛṣṇa is always very eager to taste the wonderful mellows of our loving offerings to Him.

Śivarāma Swami is an ISKCON guru as well as ISKCON's governing body commissioner for Hungary. This article was adapted from a lecture.

Yamarāja Dāsa

Orlando Rathayātrā—September, 2006

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama")

THE TEMPLE OF MY DREAMS

A visit to an ISKCON temple inspires spiritual yearnings in a girl from Ujjain.

by Parul Upadhyaya

I MADE MY FIRST visit to an ISKCON temple on December 31, 1999, the day my brother Śyāmasundara Dāsa was married at the Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha Temple in Chowpatty, Mumbai. There, for the first time, I saw His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami Mahārāja. I was only thirteen, but I thought that now, when Indians are rejecting their culture, here is a foreigner teaching my countrymen their own tradition and culture. It was also the first time I had seen a marriage in a temple before the deities. I liked the simple but beautiful ceremony and the devotional atmosphere. Later Śyāmasundara spoke to us about Lord Kṛṣṇa. I remembered only one thing from his talk: If we surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, He will free us from all our sins. After the wedding, I returned with my family to Ujjain.

Search for the Supreme

I realized that I could find the answers to my questions only in ISKCON. I used to ask spiritual questions from anyone who appeared knowledgeable. But I was never satisfied. I would ask, "Who is the greatest god?" Those who worshiped Lord Śiva would say that Lord Śiva is the Supreme, those who worshiped Lord Viṣṇu called Lord Viṣṇu God, and devotees of Devī said that she is the Supreme. Someone told me that Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are the greatest gods. But I would think, "How can all three be the Supreme God? There has to be one who is the Supreme." I would also ask, "Where was I before I was born? Where will I be after death?"

A few days after returning from Mumbai, my aunt (Śyāmasundara Dāsa's mother) Devakīmāyī Devī Dāsī, visited us in Ujjain.

I asked her, "Who is God?"

She answered that Lord Kṛṣṇa is God. People had always answered my questions in a roundabout way, so when I heard so clearly that Lord Kṛṣṇa is God, I was very satisfied.

Still, I asked her, "How is that possible? Lord Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu."

"No," she replied, "it's not like that. Lord Viṣṇu is an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and there are three Viṣṇus, not one. This is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*"

From that day on I began to chant one round of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* on beads.

When I turned sixteen, my father took me to Mumbai for summer vacation. We went to the ISKCON temple and my father bought a subscription to *Bhagavad Darśana,* the Hindi edition of *Back to Godhead.*

My father left me for fifteen days at my aunt's home and said, “Try to find out how much truth there is in this organization.”

My father had lived in a temple in his childhood and had seen much fraud in the name of God. He didn't want me to fall prey to some cheating organization.

During the vacation, I would go with my aunt and cousin Shraddhaiy to the Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha Temple in Chowpatty. I liked the temple very much. Friends of my sister Carulata (Campakalatā Devī Dāsī) were very nice to me. One day, Campakalatā told me that a devotee should be as humble as a blade of grass. I tried to follow this principle. Shraddhaiy gave me a video of the installation festival of Śrī Pañca-tattva in Māyāpur and another about Lord Caitanya. One day Campakalatā told me about the four regulative principles followed in ISKCON and the prohibitions against eating onions and garlic and drinking tea and coffee. From that day, I began to follow these rules and chant four rounds on my beads.

I prayed, “O Lord! I only desire that You keep me in a place where I can find Your holy name and Your devotees.”

A Lonely Devotee

When I returned to Ujjain, I told my mother, “I'm not going to eat onions and garlic.”

“This is a temporary phase,” she said. “You'll soon give up these fanciful ideas.”

But I stuck to my vow. When Mom saw that I was determined not to eat onions and garlic, she started cooking separately for me. I would first offer the food to the Lord and then eat. This double cooking, however, would make Mother late for her work at the office. Soon she began to cook everything without onions and garlic. Thus, gradually everyone at home stopped eating them.

I would read *Bhagavad Darśana* magazine daily, both at home and at school.

When I would come home, I would beg everyone, “Please listen. Let me tell you what nice things I read today.”

But no one wanted to listen.

In frustration and loneliness, I would cry daily in front of Lord, “Nobody understands me here. There are no devotees here. Why don't You call me to Your abode? You declared that You forgive the sins of whoever comes to Your shelter. Have I committed so many sins that You are keeping me far away from You? There is not even an ISKCON temple here where I can get the association of devotees. Please, Lord, help me. Please.”

I would worship the Lord before going to school and do Nṛsiṁha *ārati* in the evening. I felt very lonely.

People said, “You don't eat onions and garlic—who will marry a girl like you?”

I would think, “There is nothing in these people's heart except marriage, money, and job. There is hardly any place for God.”

Only my father, mother, and grandfather supported me, saying that I was doing the right thing. But I had no devotee to help me.

One day a new biology teacher came to my school. Her name was Mrs. Wagle. I noticed she was wearing *tulasī* neck beads and had ISKCON *tilaka* on her forehead.

“Are you in ISKCON?” I asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “But how do you know about ISKCON?”

I told her everything. From that day on she became more of a mother than a teacher to me.

I would read *The Science of Self-Realization* and *Bhagavad Darśana* and ask her questions. Every Sunday I would accompany her to Indore, where disciples of His Holiness Romapāda Swami run a center. On Rāma Navamī (Lord Rāmacandra's appearance day) I went with Mrs. Wagle (Mālinīpriyā Devī Dāsī) to Mumbai, where her son and daughter-in-law were receiving initiation. Mrs. Wagle's son's name is Dr. Ranjit Wagle. He serves at Bhaktivedanta Hospital as an ophthalmologist. At initiation he received the name Gaurāṅga Sundara Dāsa, and my cousin Shraddhaiy received the name Vrajarasa Dāsa.

When the *abhiṣeka* (bathing ceremony) of the deities was going on, my elder sister Mañjarī Priyā said to me, “During the *abhiṣeka,* whatever you ask from the Lord for your devotional service is very quickly granted.”

I prayed, “O Lord! I do not want education or wealth. I only desire that You keep me in a place where I can find Your holy name and Your devotees.”

During the return train journey with Mrs. Wagle, we met a devotee who had come from Los Angeles and was going to the Ujjain Kumbhamelā. Her name was Veda-vyāsa Devī Dāsī, and she was a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. She came with me and stayed in our house for a few days.

When my father saw her genuine devotion, he asked, “Ujjain is the place where Lord Kṛṣṇa studied under Sāndīpani Muni, but there is no ISKCON temple here. Why?”

“Very soon ISKCON will arrive here,” she prophesized.

By that time, I had begun chanting sixteen rounds and soon

(*please turn to page 31*)

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

LORD VIṢṆU IS HONORED WITH SACRIFICE

Now that Lord Viṣṇu has arrived at Dakṣa's sacrifice, Dakṣa and others in attendance will praise Him with exalted prayers.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 7

21 वक्षस्यधिश्रितवधूर्वनमाल्युदार-
हासावलोककलया रमयंश्च विश्वम्
पार्श्वभ्रमद्व्यजनचामरराजहंसः
श्वेतातपत्रशशिनोपरि रज्यमानः

vakṣasy adhiśrita-vadhūr vana-māly udāra-
hāsāvaloka-kalayā ramayaṁś ca viśvam
pārśva-bhramad-vyajana-cāmara-rāja-haṁsaḥ
śvetātapatra-śaśinopari rajyamānaḥ

vakṣasi—on the chest; *adhiśrita*—situated; *vadhūḥ*—a woman (the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī); *vana-mālī*—garlanded with forest flowers; *udāra*—beautiful; *hāsa*—smiling; *avaloka*—glance; *kalayā*—with a small part; *ramayan*—pleasing; *ca*—and; *viśvam*—the whole world; *pārśva*—side; *bhramat*—moving back and forth; *vyajana-cāmara*—white yak-tail hair for fanning; *rāja-haṁsaḥ*—swan; *śveta-ātapatra-śaśinā*—with a white canopy like the moon; *upari*—above; *rajyamānaḥ*—looking beautiful.

Lord Viṣṇu looked extraordinarily beautiful because the goddess of fortune and a garland were situated on His chest. His face was beautifully decorated with a smiling attitude which can captivate the entire world, especially the devotees. Fans of white hair appeared on both sides of the Lord like white swans, and the white canopy overhead looked like the moon.

PURPORT: The smiling face of Lord Viṣṇu is pleasing to the whole world. Not only devotees but even nondevotees are attracted by such a smile. This verse nicely describes how the sun, moon, eight-petalled lotus flower, and humming black bees were represented by the fans of hair, the overhead canopy, the moving earrings on both sides of His face, and His blackish hair. All together, accompanied by the conch shell, wheel, club, lotus flower, bow, arrows, shield, and sword in His hands, these presented a grand and beautiful audience for Lord Viṣṇu which captivated all the demigods there, including Dakṣa and Lord Brahmā.

22 तमुपागतमालक्ष्य सर्वे सुरगणादयः
प्रणेमुः सहसोत्थाय ब्रह्मेन्द्रत्र्यक्षनायकाः

tam upāgatam ālakṣya
sarve sura-gaṇādayaḥ
praṇemuḥ sahasotthāya
brahmendra-tryakṣa-nāyakāḥ

tam—Him; *upāgatam*—arrived; *ālakṣya*—after seeing; *sarve*—all; *sura-gaṇa-ādayaḥ*—the demigods and others; *praṇemuḥ*—obeisances; *sahasā*—immediately; *utthāya*—after standing up; *brahma*—Lord Brahmā; *indra*—Lord Indra; *tri-akṣa*—Lord Śiva (who has three eyes); *nāyakāḥ*—led by.

As soon as Lord Viṣṇu was visible, ① all the demigods—Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, the Gandharvas, and all present there—immediately offered their respectful obeisances by falling down straight before Him.

PURPORT: It appears that Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Lord even of Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā, what to speak of the demigods, Gandharvas, and ordinary living entities. It is stated in a prayer, *yaṁ brahmā varuṇendra-rudra-marutāḥ:* all the demigods worship Lord Viṣṇu. ② Similarly, *dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ:* yogis concentrate their minds on the form of Lord Viṣṇu. Thus Lord Viṣṇu is worshipable by all demigods, all Gandharvas, and even Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā. *Tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ:* Viṣṇu is therefore the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even though Lord Śiva was previously referred to in prayers by Lord Brahmā as the Supreme, when Lord Viṣṇu appeared, Śiva also fell prostrated before Him to offer respectful obeisances.

23 तत्तेजसा हतरुचः सन्नजिह्वाः ससाध्वसाः
मूर्ध्ना धृताञ्जलिपुटा उपतस्थुरधोक्षजम्

tat-tejasā hata-rucaḥ
sanna-jihvāḥ sa-sādhvasāḥ
mūrdhnā dhṛtāñjali-puṭā
upatasthur adhokṣajam

tat-tejasā—by the glaring effulgence of His body; *hata-rucaḥ*—having faded lusters; *sanna-jihvāḥ*—having silent tongues; *sa-sādhvasāḥ*—having fear of Him; *mūrdhnā*—with the head; *dhṛta-añjali-puṭāḥ*—with hands touched to the head; *upatasthuḥ*—prayed; *adhokṣajam*—to Adhokṣaja, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In the presence of the glaring effulgence of the bodily luster of Nārāyaṇa, everyone else's luster faded away, and everyone stopped speaking. Fearful with awe and veneration, all present touched their hands to their heads and prepared to offer their prayers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Adhokṣaja.

24 अप्यर्वाग्वृत्तयो यस्य महि त्वात्मभुवादयः
यथामति गृणन्ति स्म कृतानुग्रहविग्रहम्

apy arvāg-vṛttayo yasya
mahi tv ātmabhuv-ādayaḥ
yathā-mati gṛṇanti sma
kṛtānugraha-vigraham

api—still; *arvāk-vṛttayaḥ*—beyond the mental activities; *yasya*—whose; *mahi*—glory; *tu*—but; *ātmabhū-ādayaḥ*—Brahmā, etc.; *yathā-mati*—according to their different capacities; *gṛṇanti sma*—offered prayers; *kṛta-anugraha*—manifested by His grace; *vigraham*—transcendental form.

Although the mental scope of even demigods like Brahmā was unable to comprehend the unlimited glories of the Supreme Lord, they were all able to perceive the transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by His grace. Only by such grace could they offer their respectful prayers according to their different capacities.

PURPORT: The Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, is always unlimited, and His glories cannot be completely enumerated by anyone, even by a personality like Lord Brahmā. ③ It is said that Ananta, a direct incarnation of the Lord, has unlimited mouths, and with each mouth He has been trying to describe the glories of the Lord for an unlimited span of time, yet the glories of the Lord remain unlimited, and He therefore never finishes.

It is not possible for any ordinary living entity to understand or to glorify the unlimited Personality of Godhead, but one can offer prayers or service to the Lord according to one's particular capacity. This capacity is increased by the service spirit. ④ *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau* means that the service of the Lord begins with the tongue. This refers to chanting. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, one begins the service of the Lord. Another function of the tongue is

(1) What did everyone—including Śiva and Brahmā—do as soon as Lord Viṣṇu appeared?
(2) On whose form do real yogis concentrate their minds?
(3) What is said about Lord Ananta's attempt to glorify Lord Viṣṇu?
(4) What does the phrase *sevonmukhe hi jihvādau* say about service to the Lord?

to taste and accept the Lord's *prasāda.* We have to begin our service to the Unlimited with the tongue and become perfect in chanting, and accepting the Lord's *prasāda.*

To accept the Lord's *prasāda* means to control the entire set of senses. The tongue is considered to be the most uncontrollable sense because it hankers for so many unwholesome eatables, thereby forcing the living entity into the dungeon of material conditional life. As the living entity transmigrates from one form of life to another, he has to eat so many abominable foodstuffs that finally there is no limit. ⑤ The tongue should be engaged in chanting and in eating the Lord's *prasāda* so that the other senses will be controlled. Chanting is the medicine, and *prasāda* is the diet. With these processes one can begin his service, and as the service increases, the Lord reveals more and more to the devotee. But there is no limit to His glories, and there is no limit to engaging oneself in the service of the Lord.

25 दक्षो गृहीतार्हणसादनोत्तमं
यज्ञेश्वरं विश्वसृजां परं गुरुम्
सुनन्दनन्दाद्यनुगैर्वृतं मुदा
गृणन् प्रपेदे प्रयतः कृताञ्जलिः

dakṣo gṛhītārhaṇa-sādanottamaṁ
yajñeśvaraṁ viśva-sṛjāṁ paraṁ gurum
sunanda-nandādy-anugair vṛtaṁ mudā
gṛṇan prapede prayataḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ

dakṣaḥ—Dakṣa; *gṛhīta*—accepted; *arhaṇa*—rightful; *sādana-uttamam*—sacrificial vessel; *yajña-īśvaram*—unto the master of all sacrifices; *viśva-sṛjām*—of all the Prajāpatis; *param*—the supreme; *gurum*—preceptor; *sunanda-nanda-ādi-anugaiḥ*—by associates like Sunanda and Nanda; *vṛtam*—surrounded; *mudā*—with great pleasure; *gṛṇan*—offering respectful prayers; *prapede*—took shelter; *prayataḥ*—having a subdued mind; *kṛta-añjaliḥ*—with folded hands.

When Lord Viṣṇu accepted the oblations offered in the sacrifice, Dakṣa, the Prajāpati, began with great pleasure to offer respectful prayers unto Him. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is actually the master of all sacrifices and preceptor of all the Prajāpatis, and He is served even by such personalities as Nanda and Sunanda.

दक्ष उवाच
26 शुद्धं स्वधाम्न्युपरताखिलबुद्ध्यवस्थं
चिन्मात्रमेकमभयं प्रतिषिध्य मायाम्
तिष्ठंस्तयैव पुरुषत्वमुपेत्य तस्या-
मास्ते भवानपरिशुद्ध इवात्मतन्त्रः

dakṣa uvāca
śuddhaṁ sva-dhāmny uparatākhila-buddhy-avasthaṁ
cin-mātram ekam abhayaṁ pratiṣidhya māyām
tiṣṭhaṁs tayaiva puruṣatvam upetya tasyām
āste bhavān apariśuddha ivātma-tantraḥ

dakṣaḥ—Dakṣa; *uvāca*—said; *śuddham*—pure; *sva-dhāmni*—in Your own abode; *uparata-akhila*—completely turned back; *buddhi-avastham*—position of mental speculation; *cit-mātram*—completely spiritual; *ekam*—one without a second; *abhayam*—fearless; *pratiṣidhya*—controlling; *māyām*—material energy; *tiṣṭhan*—being situated; *tayā*—with her (Māyā); *eva*—certainly; *puruṣatvam*—overseer; *upetya*—entering into; *tasyām*—in her; *āste*—is present; *bhavān*—Your Lordship; *apariśuddhaḥ*—impure; *iva*—as if; *ātma-tantraḥ*—self-sufficient.

Dakṣa addressed the Supreme Personality of Godhead: My dear Lord, You are transcendental to all speculative positions. You are completely spiritual, devoid of all fear, and You are always in control of the material energy. Even though You appear in the material energy, You are situated transcendentally. ⑥ You are always free from material contamination because You are completely self-sufficient.

ऋत्विज ऊचुः
27 तत्त्वं न ते वयमनञ्जन रुद्रशापात्
कर्मण्यवग्रहधियो भगवन्विदामः
धर्मोपलक्षणमिदं त्रिवृदध्वराख्यं
ज्ञातं यदर्थमधिदैवमदोव्यवस्थाः

ṛtvija ūcuḥ
tattvaṁ na te vayam anañjana rudra-śāpāt
karmaṇy avagraha-dhiyo bhagavan vidāmaḥ
dharmopalakṣaṇam idaṁ trivṛd adhvarākhyaṁ
jñātaṁ yad-artham adhidaivam ado vyavasthāḥ

ṛtvijaḥ—the priests; *ūcuḥ*—began to say; *tattvam*—truth; *na*—not; *te*—of Your Lordship; *vayam*—all of us; *anañjana*—without material contamination; *rudra*—Lord Śiva; *śāpāt*—by his curse; *karmaṇi*—in fruitive activities; *avagraha*—being too much attached; *dhiyaḥ*—of such intelligence; *bhagavan*—O Lord; *vidāmaḥ*—know; *dharma*—religion; *upalakṣaṇam*—symbolized; *idam*—

(5) In what two functions should the tongue be engaged for serving the Lord?
(6) What does Dakṣa say is the reason for the Lord's being free from material contamination?

this; *tri-vṛt*—the three departments of knowledge of the *Vedas; adhvara*—sacrifice; *ākhyam*—of the name; *jñātam*—known to us; *yat*—that; *artham*—for the matter of; *adhidaivam*—for worshiping the demigods; *adaḥ*—this; *vyavasthāḥ*—arrangement.

The priests addressed the Lord, saying: O Lord, transcendental to material contamination, ⑦ by the curse offered by Lord Śiva's men we have become attached to fruitive activities, and thus we are now fallen and therefore do not know anything about You. On the contrary, we are now involved in the injunctions of the three departments of the Vedic knowledge under the plea of executing rituals in the name of yajña. We know that You have made arrangements for distributing the respective shares of the demigods.

PURPORT: The *Vedas* are known as *traiguṇya-viṣayā vedāḥ* (Bg. 2.45). ⑧ Those who are serious students of the *Vedas* are very much attached to the ritualistic ceremonies mentioned in the *Vedas,* and therefore these *veda-vādīs* cannot understand that the ultimate goal of the *Vedas* is to understand Lord Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu. Those who have transcended the qualitative Vedic attractions, however, can understand Kṛṣṇa, who is never contaminated by the material qualities. Therefore Lord Viṣṇu is addressed here as *anañjana* (free from material contamination). In *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.42) the crude Vedic scholars have been deprecated by Kṛṣṇa as follows:

yām imāṁ puṣpitāṁ vācaṁ
pravadanty avipaścitaḥ
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha
nānyad astīti vādinaḥ

"Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the *Vedas,* and they say that there is nothing more than this."

सदस्या ऊचुः
28 उत्पत्त्यध्वन्यशरण उरुक्लेशदुर्गेऽन्तकोग्र-
व्यालान्विष्टे विषयमृगतृष्यात्मगेहोरुभारः
द्वन्द्वश्वभ्रे खलमृगभये शोकदावेऽज्ञसार्थः
पादौकस्ते शरणद कदा याति कामोपसृष्टः

(7) What do the priests say was the result of their being cursed by Lord Śiva's men?
(8) Why can't the *veda-vādīs* understand the ultimate goal of the *Vedas*?
(9) Why is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement the greatest relief work for human society?

sadasyā ūcuḥ
utpatty-adhvany aśaraṇa uru-kleśa-durge 'ntakogra-
vyālānviṣṭe viṣaya-mṛga-tṛṣy ātma-gehoru-bhāraḥ
dvandva-śvabhre khala-mṛga-bhaye śoka-dāve
'jña-sārthaḥ
pādaukas te śaraṇada kadā yāti kāmopasṛṣṭaḥ

sadasyāḥ—the members of the assembly; *ūcuḥ*—said; *utpatti*—repeated birth and death; *adhvani*—on the path of; *aśaraṇe*—not having a place to take shelter; *uru*—great; *kleśa*—troublesome; *durge*—in the formidable fort; *antaka*—termination; *ugra*—ferocious; *vyāla*—snakes; *anviṣṭe*—being infested with; *viṣaya*—material happiness; *mṛga-tṛṣi*—mirage; *ātma*—body; *geha*—home; *uru*—heavy; *bhāraḥ*—burden; *dvandva*—dual; *śvabhre*—holes, ditches of so-called happiness and distress; *khala*—ferocious; *mṛga*—animals; *bhaye*—being afraid of; *śoka-dāve*—the forest fire of lamentation; *ajña-sa-arthaḥ*—for the interest of the rascals; *pāda-okaḥ*—shelter of Your lotus feet; *te*—unto You; *śaraṇa-da*—giving shelter; *kadā*—when; *yāti*—went; *kāma-upasṛṣṭaḥ*—being afflicted by all sorts of desires.

The members of the assembly addressed the Lord: O exclusive shelter for all who are situated in troubled life, in this formidable fort of conditional existence the time element, like a snake, is always looking for an opportunity to strike. This world is full of ditches of so-called distress and happiness, and there are many ferocious animals always ready to attack. The fire of lamentation is always blazing, and the mirage of false happiness is always alluring, but one has no shelter from them. Thus foolish persons live in the cycle of birth and death, always overburdened in discharging their so-called duties, and we do not know when they will accept the shelter of Your lotus feet.

PURPORT: Persons who are not in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are living a very precarious life, as described in this verse, but all these circumstantial conditions are due to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. ⑨ The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to give relief to all these bewildered and distressed persons; therefore it is the greatest relief work for all human society, and the workers thereof are the greatest well-wishers, for they follow in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya, who is the greatest friend to all living entities.

[*continued in the next issue*]

TEMPLE (*continued from page 26*) appeared for my twelfth-grade exams. I had always excelled in studies, but that year I hardly studied at all. I had lost all interest in my books. I would only read books about Lord Kṛṣṇa. Within my thick physics textbook, I would hide *Kṛṣṇa, the Reservoir of Pleasure* and read it secretly. Moreover, I fell sick during the exams. When the results were declared, I had failed. I was shattered and cried bitterly. My cousin Ritu, also an ISKCON devotee, was with me at that time.

"Lord Kṛṣṇa never does anything wrong to anyone," she consoled me. "You used to study a lot, but this year you failed because you neglected your studies."

This setback helped me; my pride got shattered, and I became more tolerant. Fortunately, because of a new rule, I didn't lose a year and was granted admission to a boarding school.

Answers to Prayers

In July, I read in a newspaper that there would be a big ISKCON temple in Ujjain. I was jubilant. Every day I would scan the newspaper for even a tiny bit of information about the new temple. In that newspaper, I first saw His Holiness Bhakti Cāru Swami Mahārāja.

One day, during math class, our teacher shouted, "Hey! Look there! There are the Hare Kṛṣṇas."

I was so overcome with joy on seeing the devotees that I ran out of class to meet them. While speaking to them, I suddenly remembered that my class was going on. When I stepped into the class, everyone was staring at me in disbelief.

"Why did you go out?" the teacher asked me.

I replied that I wanted to see the ISKCON devotees. Everyone laughed.

Then I came to know that ISKCON had just built a temporary temple behind my school. Nothing could stop me now. Every day I would visit the temple with my friends and ask about the opening.

On November 7, 2004, construction began. On that day, His Holiness Bhakti Cāru Swamī Mahārāja, holding something covered with a white cloth, entered the temporary temple. I wasn't sure what was going on, but when everyone went inside, the altar curtains opened and I realized that Mahārāja had been carrying small deities of Rādhā Madana-mohana. The Lord had finally appeared in Ujjain! I could not believe it. Not only had the Lord appeared, but I had also found my spiritual master—His Holiness Bhakti Cāru Swamī Mahārāja, who had brought the Lord to Ujjain. What more mercy could I have asked for?

November 12 was Dipawali. I told my father I wanted to go for the *maṅgala-ārati.* Papa took me for the *ārati* and let me stay there after it ended. On that day, Mahārāja gave the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

Mahārāja is from Bengal, as are many of his disciples, so he gave the class in Bengali.

"Do you know Bengali?" he asked me.

"No," I replied.

Then he asked a woman to translate the class for me. I was very happy that day—it was the first time Mahārāja had spoken to me.

That day Papa also heard the class and asked Mahārāja, "How can we experience the spiritual world while staying in this world?"

Mahārāja was very happy with the question and gave an enlightening answer. Papa found so much bliss in the *maṅgala-ārati* that he felt he was in heaven. He also developed a desire to join ISKCON. He met Mahārāja, left his job, and became a full-time devotee at the temple. This was the happiest occasion for me.

Life has come full circle for me. Where initially I was alone in Ujjain, now I have the wonderful association of devotees, Guru Mahārāja, and the Lord—everything I need. Truly if we take one step towards Lord Kṛṣṇa, He rushes to us with thousands of strides.

Parul Upadhyaya lives with her family in Ujjain.

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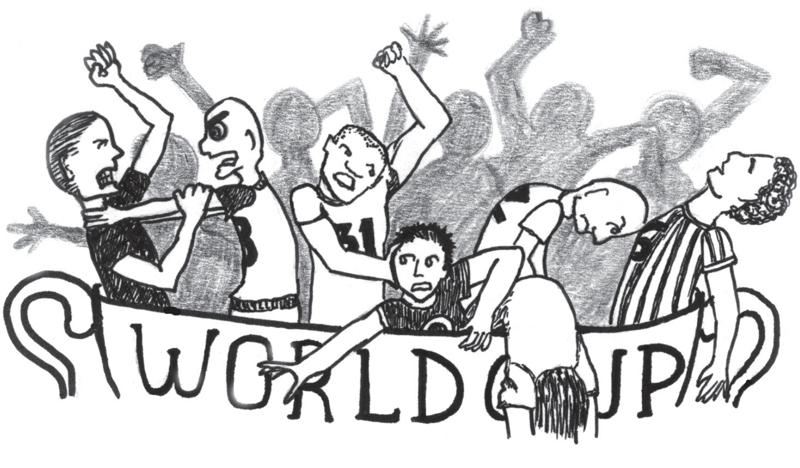
The Ultimate Goal

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa

THE LATE Bill Shankly, football (soccer) player and manager, when asked if he thought football was a matter of life and death, famously said, "It's more important than that."

Judging by the wall-to-wall media coverage of the World Cup, compared to the miniscule programming for trivial matters such as what happens to us after death, it seems Bill had a point. Here in England the flags are out everywhere, the talk is all about our star striker's injured foot, and a nation waits on its sofas for the show to begin.



When sports become more than life or death, it is surely time to rethink our values.

Heaven forbid that by the time this piece is published England's dreams of glory are dashed, but are such sporting events the right place to repose our hopes? What indeed are we hoping for? Success, of course, but why? What is it about a national sporting victory that makes us so euphoric?

Every true-blooded Englishman will probably read these words with horror. "What is he talking about? Obviously we want our team to win. How could we even brook the possibility of a German victory or, worse still, a French one? It surely does not bear thinking about."

But let's just give it some thought. Here we have a perfect illustration of a key Vedic teaching. Although we are eternal souls who ultimately have nothing to do with anything in this ever-changing world, in material consciousness we identify with the temporary body and the land in which it was born. We thus imagine ourselves to be English, American, German, or whatever. England's success is therefore my success, and I am over the moon when it happens.

But is this imaginary elation really happiness? How long will it last? Will it solve any of the problems of my life, such as my growing old, becoming diseased, and dying? If the glorious event should occur and our team lifts the cup, will any of these problems be in any way diminished? It might provide a distraction for some time, but isn't that simply a head-in-the-sand approach to life's real issues?

Śrīla Prabhupāda called frivolous sports gambling, and it is true, because we gamble with that most precious of all things, time. We do not know how much time we have in this human life. It is a rare and valuable opportunity to permanently solve all problems by achieving pure God consciousness. Reclining on the sofa to watch football betrays our assumption that we will have time later for dealing with our material predicament. But who knows? If our team wins, we may have a heart attack right there on the couch.

Enjoyment of this kind is described as "mental concoction" in *Bhagavad-gītā.* If England wins I experience joy because I think I am English, but what is my feeling if I think I am German? I may suddenly suffer from amnesia and forget who I am, that I am English; it sometimes happens. What then will England's victory mean to me? Material so-called happiness is always like this: born of the mind, relative, and temporary—and on top of that the cause of such joy will very likely be the cause of misery to someone else.

On the other hand, spiritual or absolute happiness, the happiness of the soul, is real and leaves no one feeling miserable. It results from pleasing God, which is compared to watering the root of a tree; the whole tree is thereby nourished. If the tiny twig of England is watered, the rest of the tree gets no benefit at all. Indeed, even the watered twig itself remains unnourished.

But do the *Vedas* not talk about Kṛṣṇa's "sporting pastimes"? Can devotees not enjoy a game of anything? Does sport not have any utility in Kṛṣṇa's service?

In response to the first question, we can see where our desire to enjoy sports originates. In the spiritual world devotees are eternally enjoying with the Lord in so many ways, but without anyone experiencing any misery, even if they are "defeated." Because Kṛṣṇa is pleased, everyone wins, enjoying the highest possible happiness.

Sports in this world can also have spiritual utility if we understand life's ultimate goal to be self-realization. We need to keep our bodies fit for spiritual life, and sports are a good way to exercise. They can also teach useful skills like teamwork, which can be helpful in spiritual life too. But when sports become more than life or death, it is surely time to rethink our values.

So let's keep fixed in life's real mission, knowing and pleasing God. Then, if the unthinkable should happen and our team loses, we won't feel like wrecking the town.

Dream World of the Villages

by Pañca Tattva Dāsa

IN CENTRAL FLORIDA there's a booming retirement community called The Villages, the largest single-site real estate development in the United States. The Villages website invites people age fifty-five and up to live in "the perfect place to enjoy life as you've always dreamed." There are pictures of happy seniors marching in parades, riding on golf carts, and admiring hotrods from the fifties. Lots of swimming, tennis, and arts and crafts. Everyone looks pleasant and helpful, happy and healthy.

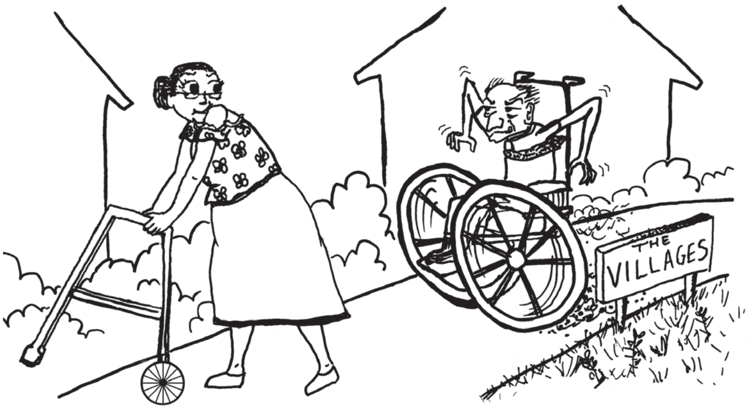
But old habits die hard, for The Villages is experiencing an explosion of cases of sexually transmitted disease. It seems the elderly really do want to enjoy life as they've always dreamed, and now some of them are being assisted by drugs like Viagra. A doctor in practice there says she's seeing more cases of herpes and human papilloma virus than she did when she worked in Miami. She has even treated a patient in her eighties. Dream life, indeed! What kind of dream is it when you wake up with an incurable disease?

This is Kali-yuga, a time in which unregulated, irreligious behavior becomes prominent, and sometimes it looks as though moral standards decline within the scope of just a few generations. It's especially startling, though, when it involves the elderly. Why is that? Perhaps it's because we expect those who are older to be wiser—at least wiser than we are. They've arrived at the far shore, and we hope they can show us how to successfully navigate our way there.

But if you have spent your life pursuing material enjoyment, how will your actions in old age depart from the patterns you've already established? You hear a tiny inner voice that says life is meant for a higher purpose, and you may even want to change your ways, but faced with unlimited longings for sense pleasure reinforced by many decades of indulgence, that lone desire is easily subdued. And when a drug comes along that can stimulate your tired old body to act in inappropriate ways, you might not be able to resist.

Therefore, great saints and sages urge us not to wait until the fag end of life, when we've already got one foot in the grave, to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At five years old, the boy saint Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life—in other words, from the tender age of childhood—to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements."

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness the emphasis is on purifying the heart's desires through the practice of devotional yoga, particularly by carefully chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra.* Over time, one's innate desire for service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead awakens. It is this kind of elderly person—or young person, for that matter—who is truly wise, because he or she can guide us out of this material world entirely, to go back home, back to Godhead. Otherwise, without taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we may think that the dreamy life of The Villages is very nice, and risk waking up to a nightmare. ❀

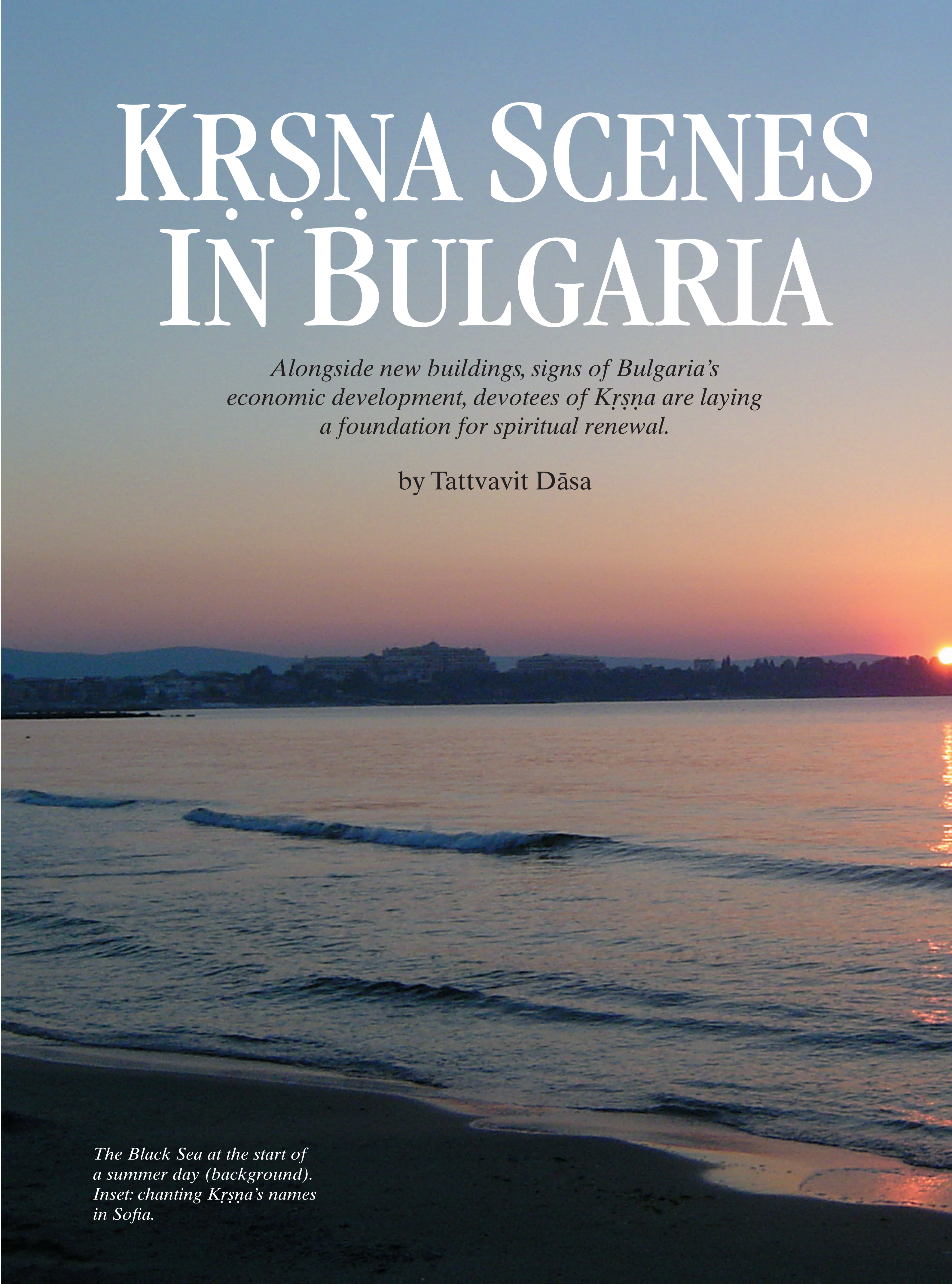


What kind of dream life is it when you wake up with an incurable disease?

KṚṢṆA SCENES IN BULGARIA

Alongside new buildings, signs of Bulgaria's economic development, devotees of Kṛṣṇa are laying a foundation for spiritual renewal.

by Tattvavit Dāsa



The Black Sea at the start of a summer day (background). Inset: chanting Kṛṣṇa's names in Sofia.

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Fiesta

Śankārṣana Dāsa

MY TRAVELER'S guide said that Sofia, set on an elevated plateau, is the highest European capital. It looked high. During all the mild mornings of mid-July the top of the mountain range south of the city seemed close to the waning moon. Our Hare Kṛṣṇa temple is a house at the foot of one of the mountains.

On three sides of the temple, men were constructing large buildings—indicative of the fast development Bulgaria has its sights set on, with plans to join the European Union this January. Still, in a field behind our house a traditional farmer grazed sheep. The bells around their necks made music when they walked. The shepherd, carrying a folding stool, sat down when his flock stopped.

Bulgarian culture has begun to encounter Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism and the chanting of names of God: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Devotees in Sofia and elsewhere in Bulgaria ask God to engage them in His loving service and purify their material desires. Some devotees are young and run small businesses and start families, but they renounce intoxicants, meat-eating, gambling, and nonreproductive sex. In contrast, Sofia has casinos big and small, its billboards use sexual

Background photo: Mahendra Dāsa

Mahendra Dāsa

provocation, and its Orthodox Christianity approves of animal slaughter.

Regardless of what financial benefits Bulgarians will see in this life, working to enjoy one's profits entangles one in material life. But, Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā,* a steadily devoted soul attains peace by offering the results of all activities to Him. Thus Bulgarians will benefit most from their work by gradually learning to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Bulgarians in Belgium

All the Bulgarian devotees I met before visiting their country last summer have served at a Hare Kṛṣṇa community in rural Belgium. I was there teaching students at Bhaktivedanta College how to improve their essays. Mahendra Dāsa (Mladen Balabanov) joined the staff of the college in 2005 and taught two-week seminars on philosophy and world religions. His parents are a teacher and a scholar. He is thirty-five. As a boy he studied piano, and nowadays he skillfully plays devotional instruments and often leads the congregational chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

"During the Communist period in Bulgaria," he said, "drugs were not available, and I was not inter-

In the typical Bulgarian village of Aheloy (above), where the author stayed, backyards contain fruit trees, chickens, and gardens. At right, devotees in Sofia welcome a devotee couple from America. Far right: Mahendra Dāsa.

Śankārṣana Dāsa

ested in them anyway. I did not smoke or drink."

During the mid-1990s he took charge of the Sofia Hare Kṛṣṇa center. Then he obtained a Bachelor's degree in philosophy and later studied information systems and management at the London School of Economics.

"I always hoped to use what I learned directly in Kṛṣṇa's service," he said.

His wife, Saṅgītā Dāsī, encouraged him to join the Bhaktivedanta College staff instead of doing business. (She works as a set designer for Hollywood film companies that shoot in Bulgaria.) Last summer he became a part-time graduate student at De Montfort University in Leicester, England. Now, besides teaching some two-week modules and doing administrative work at the college, he is doing a post-graduate study of management in the field of organizational justice.

A Talk About the Body

When the school year at Bhaktivedanta College ended last June, Mahendra and I headed to Bulgaria. On a Friday night in Sofia I spoke (Mahendra translating) to fifteen guests about a new perspective on the body: Lord Kṛṣṇa says that desire, hatred, happiness, and distress are interactions of the senses and the elements that make up the body. This viewpoint resembles a psychologist's, but Kṛṣṇa adds that the body has an indestructible knower, the soul, who makes the body work. Therefore a person is transcendental to the senses, body, and mind. And one becomes well situated and happy by tolerating the urges of the senses and checking desire and anger.

I was told that some Bulgarians follow a religion founded by Peter Dunov in Bulgaria in the early 1900s, which combines the idea of reincarnation with vegetarianism and Christian beliefs. But most people in Bulgaria know just this life. They know they are situated somewhere between birth and death. Throughout Bulgaria people post obituaries on the front doors of their houses and even on public trees to mark anniversaries of deaths in the family.

To the Sea Coast

Making lots of gradual curves through central Bulgaria's mountain range, we drove east to Mahendra's parents' house to pick up his fourteen-year-old stepson, Tiné. En route we ate *banitsa,* a warm pastry filled with cheese, which Bulgarians like to start the day with. (In Sofia we tasted *tarator*, chilled yogurt soup made with cucumber, walnuts, and dill. One bacterium used to make yogurt is called *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* because it thrives on Bulgarian land.)

Continuing east, we reached the Black Sea coast and headed south

Viṣṇu-priyā Devī-Dāsī

Students and teachers at Sofia University hear from Saṅkarṣana Dāsa, visiting from America, about the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

to the village where we stayed. Our hosts, male twins named Nitāicandra Dāsa and Gauracandra Dāsa and their parents, grow tomatoes and cucumbers in a huge greenhouse (or "glasshouse" as it is known in Europe). The twins now live near the greenhouse and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness there, so we stayed in their former rooms on the top floor of the family's house. Breezes cooled us all day, and the balcony provided a view of roofs and gardens of a traditional neighborhood. Cocks crowed at dawn, but being early birds ourselves, we were already up chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on our beads.

Three devotees from the Sofia temple were also house guests, and they were busy distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in the area. The cover photo of one book shows Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa wearing clothes with horizontal bands of color: white, green, and red—the colors of the Bulgarian flag. [See page 41.] I guessed that the Bulgarian devotees who translated the book may have chosen the photo for that reason.

The twins take care of three cows. And the fresh milk is drunk and made into curd and rice pudding ("sweet rice"). Out on a short walk near the greenhouse I came to a spacious grove of walnut trees, another natural opulence of rural life in Bulgaria.

Every day before sunrise we drove to a beach. We would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on our beads for an hour and a half and then swim. Afterward we met the twins, to sing and talk about Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa before eating the breakfast Gauracandra cooked.

Winding down at a beach one weekend was a party with techno music. This prompted me to tell Mahendra that Shakespeare wrote about a character "that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning." In other words, the early morning is auspicious and meant for the spiritual development of the brain. Kṛṣṇa says, "What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-realized."

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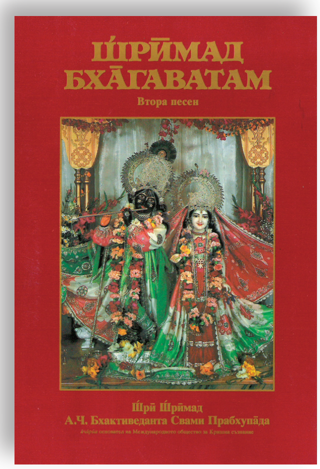
Śaṅkārṣana Dāsa

Sthānu Dāsa, Rūpa Manohara Dāsa, and other devotees (above) joyfully chant Kṛṣṇa's names (shown on the sign in Cyrillic). Above right: the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam *in Cyrillic, a script for Slavic languages invented in the ninth century by two Bulgarian priests, the brothers Cyril and Methodius.*

We devotees see the sun rise on time and feel the regular seasonal temperatures and know that the master, Kṛṣṇa, is there, and we want to be His eternal servant. That is the actual position of the soul.

His Holiness A. C. Bhaktivaibhava Swami, ISKCON's governing body commissioner for the country, hopes that Kṛṣṇa consciousness will keep spreading in Bulgaria. He told me by e-mail that he wished for any help in the form of supplies and support.

"There is a great potential for spiritual life among the citizens of Bulgaria," he wrote. "Our Ratha-yātrā festival and other programs are well attended and appreciated by government officials. We could do much more to benefit Bulgarians, but our resources are extremely limited. So our members can only make a humble attempt to spread


Ш́РӢМАД
БХА̄ГАВАТАМ
Втора песен
Ш́рӣ Ш́рӣмад
А.Ч. Бхактиведанта Свами Прабхупа̄да
а̄ча̄рйа основател на Международното общество за Кришна съзнание

the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to every town and village."

Lord Caitanya predicted five hundred years ago that Kṛṣṇa's names will become known and chanted worldwide. Now the devotees are presenting Kṛṣṇa's names and message to the Bulgarian populace. In the coastal area, in three weeks, 350 books were distributed by Tulasī Dāsa, Puruṣa-acutya Dāsa, and Pāṇḍava-bandhava Dāsa (a law-school graduate). Tulasī Dāsa hopes that Bulgaria's economic growth will enable more people to own and read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Then people will flourish without being captivated by the motives of making money and lording it over material nature.

Tattvavit Dāsa began contributing articles to BTG when he was on the staff for five years in the 1980s, and still edits and develops articles for the magazine. He has edited a dozen books. At Bhaktivedanta College, from the time the college opened in 2002 till January 2007, he taught students how to improve their essays.

Eleven Rathayātrās

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Rādhā-vinoda Dāsa

The Ratha cart rolls past the Council of Ministers building in Sofia.

THE FIRST Rathayātrā parade in Bulgaria was organized in 1996, the centennial year of the birth of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda celebrated Rathayātrā as a child in Calcutta, his hometown, and later introduced it in cities worldwide.

The Bulgarian Rathayātrā festival was the first in the Balkans. Ānanda Caitanya Dāsa carved the deities of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā. Sasa Bindhu Dāsa, an art-college graduate, painted them. Nicki, who studied architecture, designed the chariot according to the scriptural specifications. And an elder wheelwright in the village of Manolovo made the chariot in three months.

Rathayātrā has now been held every summer in Sofia for eleven consecutive years. The national TV stations often show reports, and the main newspapers publish color photos of the festival. The parade passes the main buildings of downtown Sofia: the National Palace of Culture, the President's office, the Council of Ministers, and the Parliament.

On the evening before the event, to invoke auspiciousness, devotees perform a public Vedic fire sacrifice at the place where the parade begins. The Indian ambassador, the religious adviser of the former Bulgarian president, a university teacher, and other VIPs often come to the opening ceremonies of the parade and festival.

Naturally the festival in Sofia is not as well attended as those in London, Los Angeles, or Jagannatha Puri, but the citizens of Sofia like it. Many join the parade, pull the chariot ropes, and learn about the sacred meaning of the festival. Rathayātrā is one of the major Vaiṣṇava holidays celebrated by devotees in Bulgaria, and it is attended even by devotees from neighboring Macedonia and Serbia.

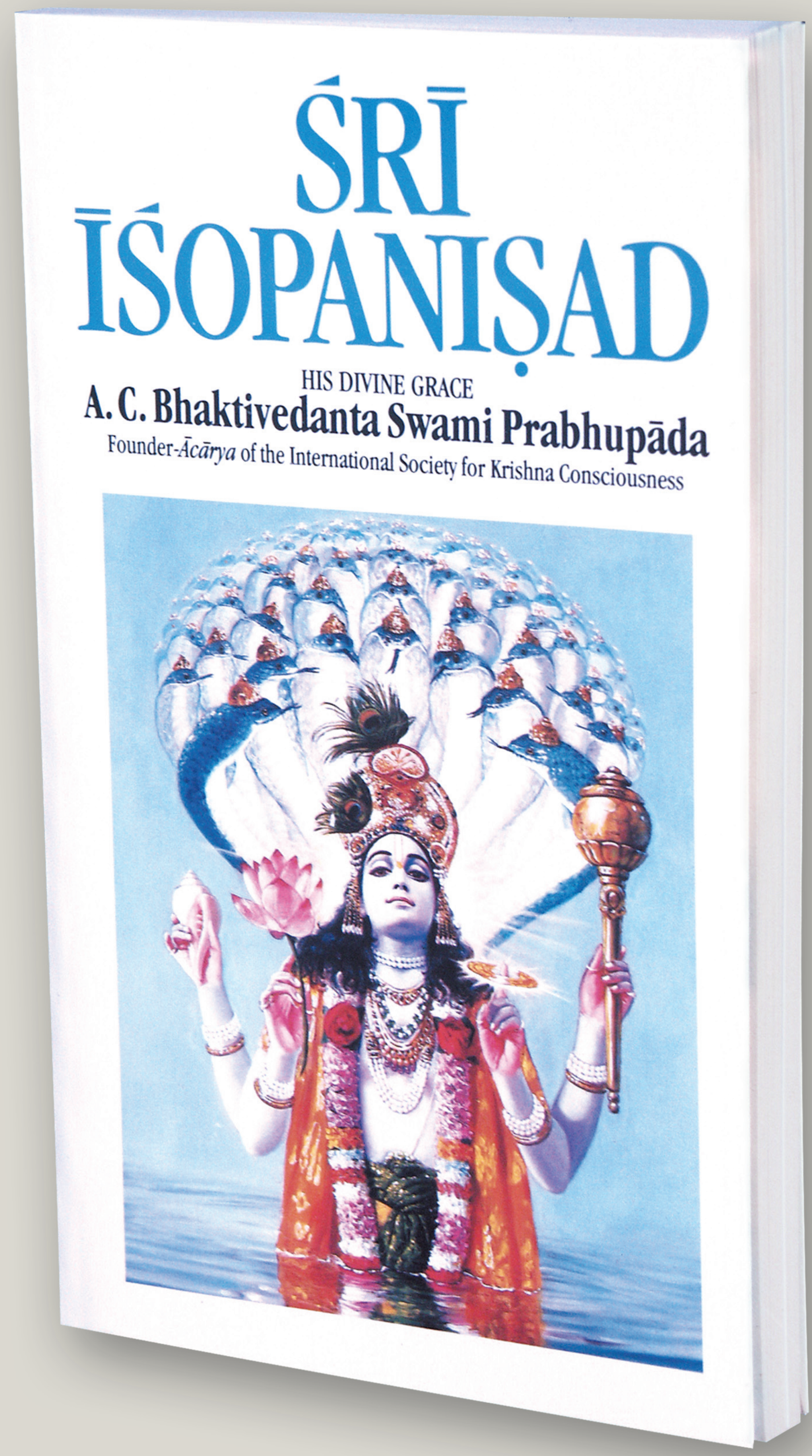
After riding through the main streets, Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā finally stop at a pleasant small park, full of venerable trees that generously shade the deities and devotees after the procession under the hot summer sun. The festival site takes on the mood of a garden party. The program includes traditional devotional songs and dances and a talk on Vedic wisdom. Hundreds of plates with *prasādam* are distributed to guests and passers-by.

—*Rādhā Vinoda Dāsa*

The Importance

Śrīla Prabhupāda chose a traditional text accepted by all classes of Vedic scholars to be one of the first books he translated.

by Satyarāja Dāsa


ŚRĪ ĪŚOPANIṢAD
HIS DIVINE GRACE
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

AMONG ALL of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* occupies a unique position. It stands alongside his most important works: *Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* and *The Nectar of Devotion.* But within the larger context of Vedic scholarship, reflected in most branches of modern-day Hinduism, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* enjoys a special status: It comes from a category of texts known as *śruti.*

Generally, *śruti* refers to the original four *Vedas* and their supplemental Upaniṣadic literature. The Vedic tradition itself honors these texts as revelation, given to the world directly by God. In addition, there is another category of literature, known as *smṛti,* or "that which is remembered." Vaiṣṇavas consider these texts equal to *śruti* in every way. In fact, *smṛti* is traditionally understood as the inner portion of *śruti,* without which the latter remains virtually indecipherable.

The English edition of Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation, with commentary, of Śrī Īśopaniṣad *is in its sixteenth printing. The book is also available around the world in dozens of other languages. Millions of copies have been sold since it was first published in 1969.*

# of Śrī Īśopaniṣad

The sacred texts generally included in the *smṛti* category are the epics (*Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) and the *Purāṇas,* which are known in the *śruti* texts as "the fifth *Veda.*" (See, for example, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.1.4 and *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.10.) In fact, since the *Bhagavad-gītā* consists of words directly emanating from Kṛṣṇa, God, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is directly about Lord Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes, true knowers of Vedic wisdom consider them *śruti* in the deepest sense of the word.

Still, some Vedic scholars deny that the epics and the *Purāṇas* are *śruti.* Nanda Misra, commenting on Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's *Siddhānta-darpaṇa* (2.1), writes, "Some philosophers, being disturbed by statements about devotion to Viṣṇu in the epics and the *Purāṇas,* try to say that those texts are not identical with the *Vedas.*" This is because of a technical division of the scriptures, which has little consequence in the life of the practitioner. Pra-bhupāda, of course, was aware of these technicalities, and his *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* indirectly addresses the problem by supporting Kṛṣṇa consciousness with a text that all Vedic scholars would accept as *śruti.* The strategy of using "Vedic" evidences goes back to the greatest Kṛṣṇa conscious masters in history, such as Jīva Gosvāmī and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and Prabhupāda was merely following their lead.

Thus, as far back as the early 1960s, before he had officially founded ISKCON, Prabhupāda had serialized his *Īśopaniṣad* manuscript in *Back to Godhead* magazine. After coming West, it was one of the first books he published. He even suggested that his 1969 lecture "What are the *Vedas*?" be used as the Introduction to the book, which underlines the importance of the *Īśopaniṣad's* Vedic status. To this day, that Introduction accompanies his *Īśopaniṣad.*

Śrī Īśopaniṣad is the fortieth (last) chapter of the *Śukla Yajur Veda* and consists of eighteen Sanskrit mantras. All lists of the most important *Upaniṣads* begin by mentioning this one. As Prabhupāda writes, "Regarding the *Upaniṣads,* the following eleven are considered to be the topmost: *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Bṛhad-āraṇyaka,* and *Śvetāśvatara.* However, in the *Muktikopaniṣad,* verses 30–39, there is a description of 108 *Upaniṣads.*" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 7.108, Purport)

A Summary of Śrī Īśopaniṣad

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Introduction

Establishes the limitations and imperfections of the conditioned soul and elucidates the higher dimensional reality of the *Vedas.*

Section One: Invocation, Mantras 1 and 2

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and therefore His creation is too. He has perfectly made arrangements for all living beings, and if we learn to live according to His arrangements, we can live happily on the spiritual platform, even in the material world.

Section Two: Mantra 3

Those who abuse the opportunity of the human form of life have a very dim future.

Section Three: Mantras 4–8

The Supreme Lord is the greatest person and possesses unique characteristics. Within Him all contradictions are resolved. The pure devotees see everything and everyone in relation to Him and are therefore on the transcendental platform, free from all anxiety. By rendering devotional service in this consciousness, they realize Him directly.

Section Four: Mantras 9–14

There are different types of nondevotee, and they achieve varying degrees of misfortune. To advance steadily, a devotee must understand both the wonderful nature of spiritual life and the defects of material life. That knowledge culminates in understanding Lord Kṛṣṇa's position as the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Section Five: Mantras 15–18

The speaker feelingly appeals to the Lord to remove His dazzling bodily effulgence and reveal His personal form. The time of death is approaching, and the devotee acknowledges that he is far from perfect. He prays that the Lord be merciful to him and, overlooking his shortcomings, accept him as an eternal servant and give him shelter at His lotus feet.

Even among *Upaniṣads,* then, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* is considered among the most important.

There are other reasons for the preeminent position of this work, and these were made clear in the earlier commentaries of Vedānta Deśika, from the Rāmānuja school of Vaiṣṇavism, and also in the one by Madhva, the great teacher from early on in the Hare Kṛṣṇa lineage. Quite simply, the *Īśopani-ṣad* (*Īśa-Upaniṣad*) is about Īśa, or Īśvara, "the Supreme Controller," God.

The word *upaniṣad* means "to sit near." Whereas most other *Upaniṣads* are somewhat vague about the nature of the Absolute Truth, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* delivers "the knowledge that brings one nearer to the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa." The book takes its readers methodically from an impersonal understanding of God to an awareness of His all-pervading and unsurpassable personal aspect.

Prabhupāda tells us that according to *Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* "the Supreme Absolute Truth is both impersonal and personal eternally, but His personal aspect is more important than the impersonal one." (*Teachings of Lord Caitanya,* Chapter 24)

By way of evidence, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* in Mantra Twelve, offers an admonition against depersonalized conceptions of God: "Those who are engaged in the worship of demigods enter into the darkest region of ignorance, and still more so do the worshipers of the impersonal Absolute." Vaiṣṇava commentators say that impersonalists tend to fall into hellish consciousness because they deny God's ability to have personal features, implying that they have something that God does not. All of our greatest pleasures come from sensual experience, and God is not to be denied such pleasures. He can see, hear, speak, and love. In short, He can experience things as we do, but without the imperfections associated with a temporary and limited nature.

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The *Īśopaniṣad* further informs us that God's impersonal feature is essentially an overwhelming white light, purely spiritual and fully engulfing all who come in its path. It is composed of God's bodily effulgence, which can be blinding, denying its viewers access to the personal form at its base. Mantra Fifteen states, "O my Lord, sustainer of all that lives, Your real face is covered by Your dazzling effulgence. Kindly remove that covering and exhibit Yourself to Your pure devotee." In Mantra Sixteen we further read, "O my Lord, O primeval philosopher, maintainer of the universe, O regulating principle, destination of the pure devotees, well-wisher of the progenitors of mankind, please remove the effulgence of Your transcendental rays so that I can see Your form of bliss. You are the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, like unto the sun, as am I." For Vaiṣṇavas, then, the impersonal aspect of the Lord is, in a sense, His less desirable side. This is so not only because it is bereft of personal characteristics, which allow one to have an intimate relationship with God, but because it can interfere with the ability to relate to God's form, as stated above.

To sum up: Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation, with commentary, of *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* accomplishes many ends. To bring out Kṛṣṇa conscious conclusions, it uses a traditional text accepted by all classes of Vedic scholars. In addition, it methodically takes its readers from the impersonal conception of the Absolute to an awareness of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But more than all this, it delivers ultimate spiritual wisdom in an accessible form, which in fact is the virtue of all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over 20 books. He lives with his wife and daughter near New York City.

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to www.krishna.com/calendar.

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Mādhava

(January 4–February 2)

JANUARY

8—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

9—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great spiritual master and author of *Gīta-govinda.*

15—Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

23—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, a Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and author who appeared in the seventeenth century. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī, the consort of Lord Caitanya.

25—Appearance anniversary of Śrī Advaita Ācārya, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's expansion Mahā-Viṣṇu and a close associate of Lord Caitanya. Fasting till noon.

27—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Madhavācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

28—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, an eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

29—Bhaimī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Fasting till noon for the appearance of Lord Varāha.

30—Appearance of Lord Varāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's boar incarnation. (No fasting.)

31—Appearance anniversary of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu, a close associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon.

FEBRUARY

2—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a spiritual master in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who composed many devotional songs in Bengali.

Month of Govinda

(February 3–March 3)

7—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, then feasting. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Gour Govinda Swami, an ISKCON guru.

14—Vijayā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

16—Śrī Śiva Rātri, a day in honor of Lord Śiva.

18—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, the great devotee in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who confirmed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's discovery of Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

27—Amalakī-vrata Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

28—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

MARCH

3—Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, the appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise, followed by a break-fast of Ekādaśī *prasādam* (no grains or beans). Feasting tomorrow.

Month of Viṣṇu

(March 4–April 2)

12—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

15—Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

23—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

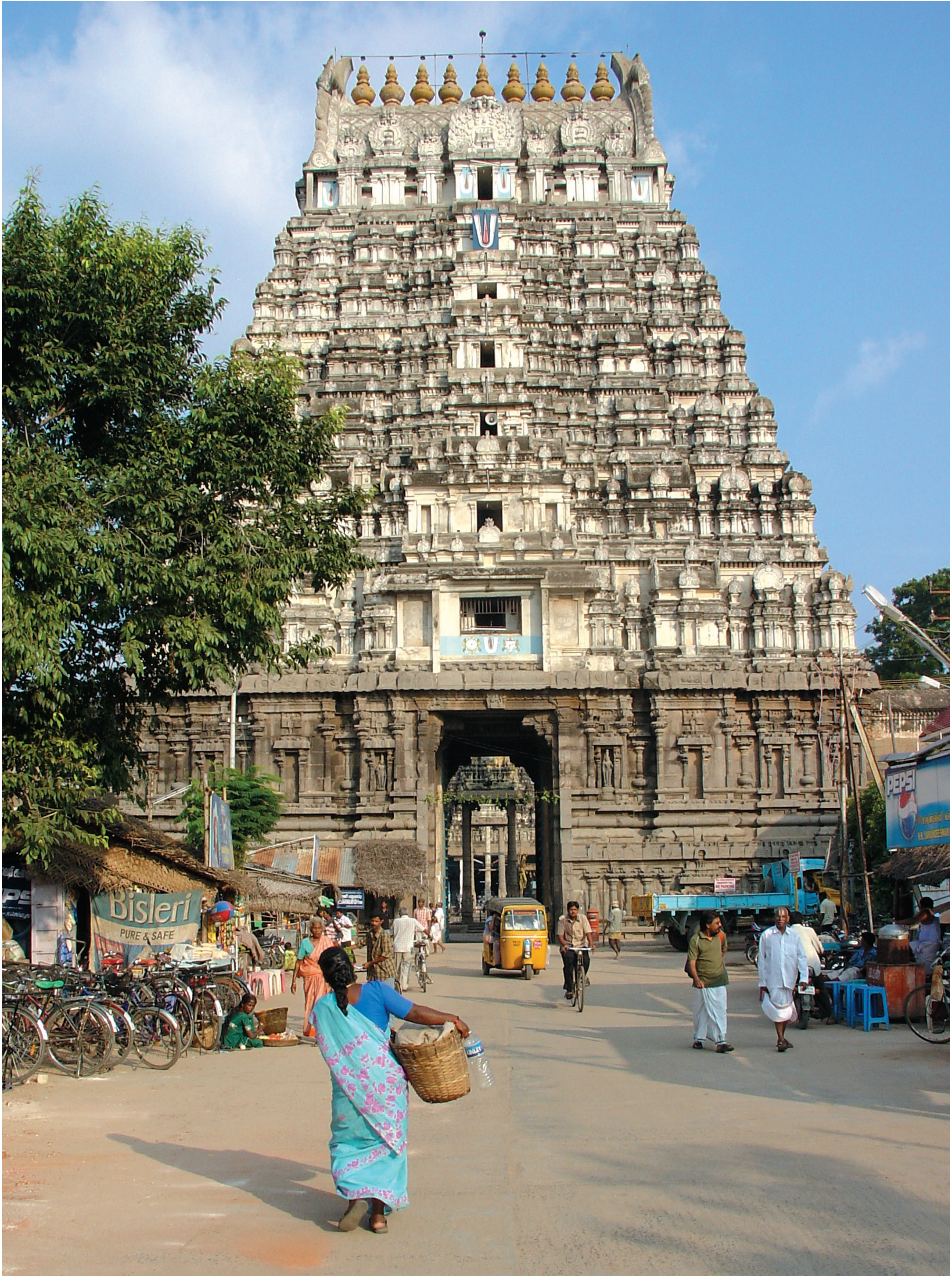
KANCHIPURAM

Home to the King of Blessers

This venerable town hosts temples whose history goes back to the ancient days of Vaiṣṇava prominence in South India.

Text and photos by Adbhuta Hari Dāsa

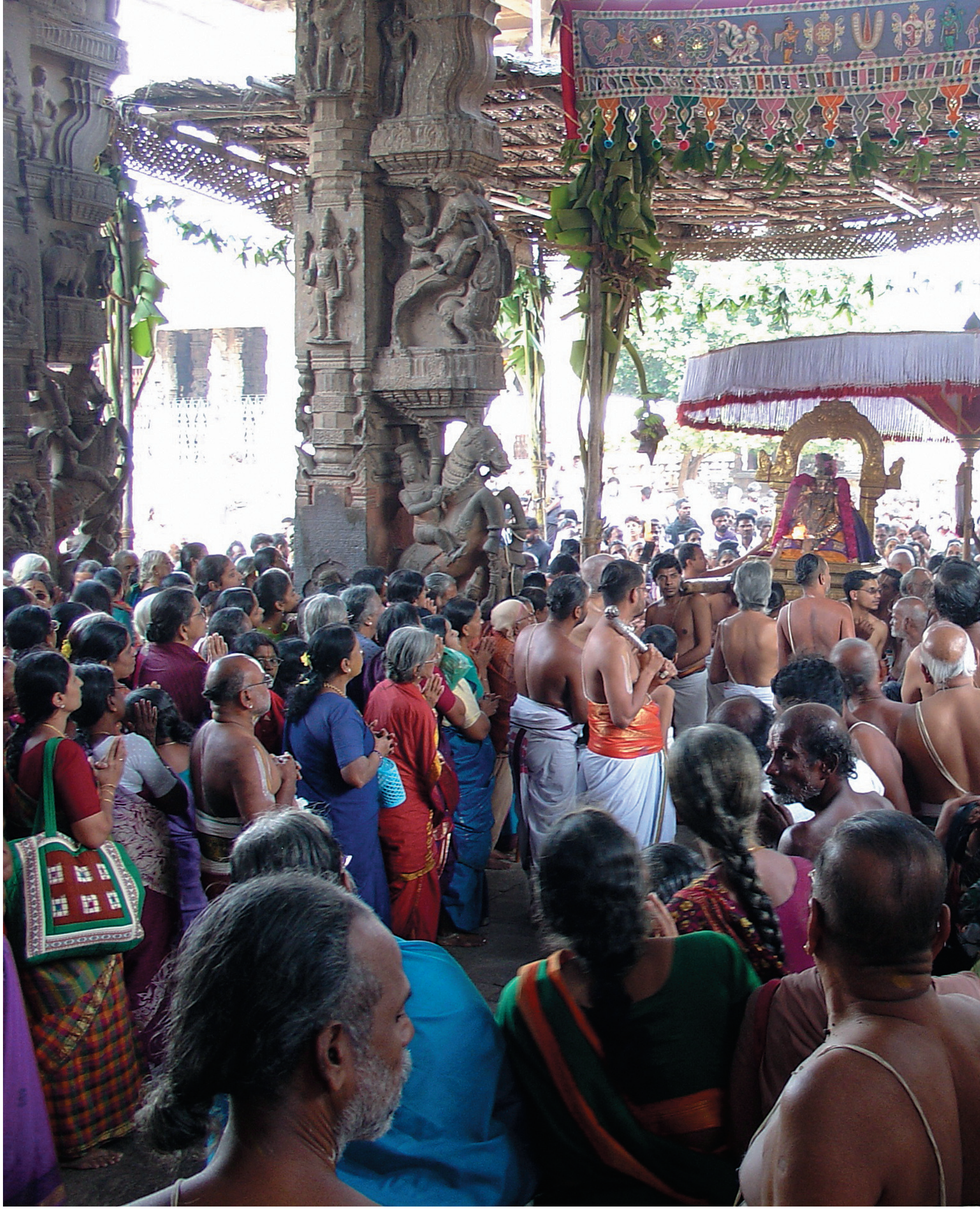
KANCHIPURAM, along with its ancient silk-trading history, is famous as a holy city and home to the great saint Rāmānujācārya and his worshipable Lord Varadarāja. Hundreds of temples attract delighted crowds that flock into this pilgrim center situated in northeast Tamil Nadu. Fifteen of these temples are designated *divya deśams,* or special "divine sites" for Śri Vaiṣṇavas (followers of Rāmānuja). These *divya deśams* are connected to the Ālvārs, prominent South Indian Vaiṣṇavas who appeared roughly between 4200 and 2700 B.C. Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu, and Madhvācārya visited here. It is the birthplace of Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, author of *Nīti-śāstra* (civic laws) and minister of the Maurya empire. It is also the birthplace of Vedānta Deśika, the most prominent Śrī Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* after Rāmānuja. And it is said that here Lord Varadarāja, the presiding deity of Kanchipuram, spoke the basic principles of *viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy to Rāmānujācārya through one of his



The main entrance to the Varadarāja Temple compound (above). The original deity of Lord Varadarāja lies underwater in the temple pond (top left) and is taken out for a special celebration once every forty years. At bottom left, the utsava *(festival) deity of Lord Varadarāja is brought to the shrine of the saint Vedānta Deśikā on the saint's appearance day (Tata Deśika is at right in the photo).*

gurus, Kāñcipūrṇa.

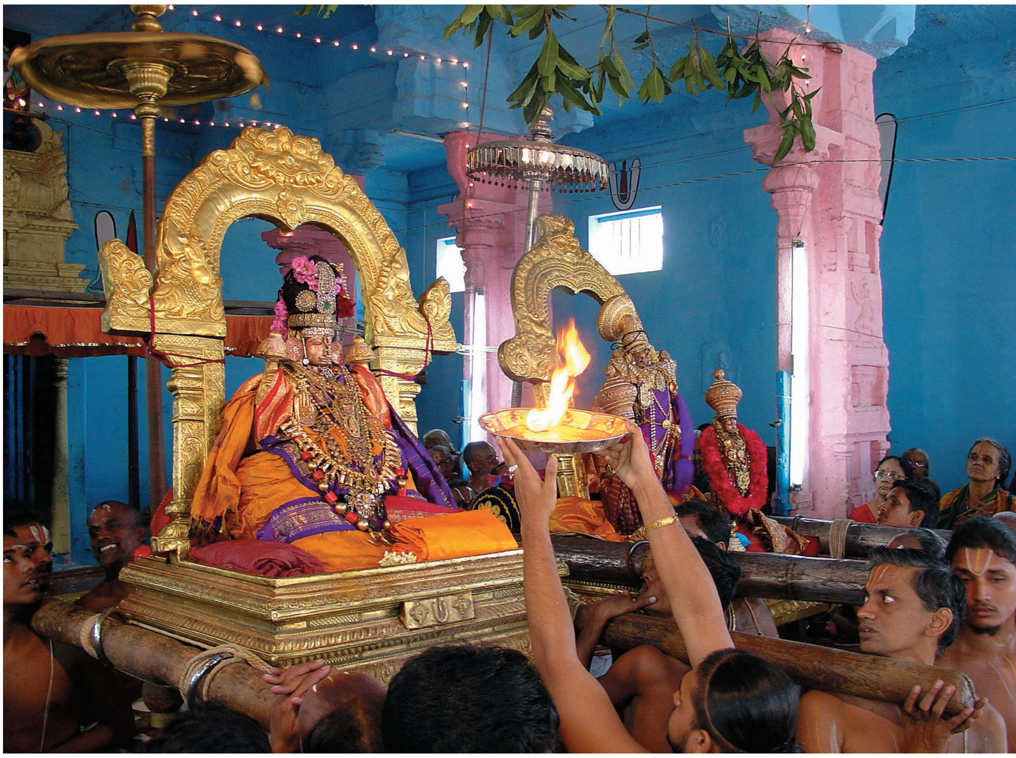
It just so happened that I arrived in Kanchi on the birth anniversary of Tata Deśika, one of the *ācāryas* of the Tatachar community, which has deep roots in this region. I immediately left for the celebration at the Varadarāja temple. As I entered the inner courtyard, which resounded with the mantra *oṁ namo nārāyaṇāya,* I saw that a big crowd of devotees had gath-

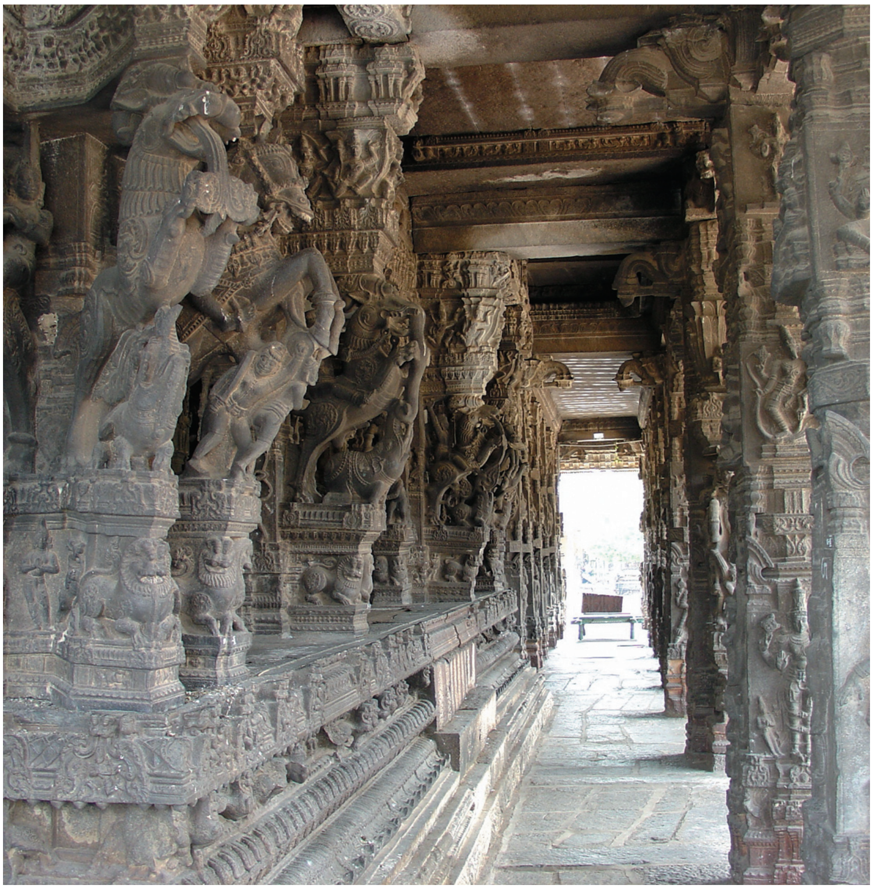


Lakṣmī Devī's garden (above). Lord Varadarāja and Lakṣmī Devī (above, right) stop before the shrine of Vedānta Deśika during a procession. At right, brāhmaṇas *distribute* prasādam *in the Varadarāja Temple compound.*

During the procession, a priest offers a flame to Lord Varadarāja and Lakṣmī Devī (below). Bottom: pillars of the hundred-pillared hall at the Varadarāja Temple.

ered in front of one of the temple shrines. I approached a small group of young men, intent on discovering the cause for this gathering. One of them, Krishna, told me excitedly that at any moment the small *utsava* ("festival") deities would be carried out of the temple and brought in front of a shrine dedicated to Tata Deśika.





Because of the patronage of Tata Deśika in the fifteenth century, many temples of South India achieved the peak of their functional and architectural development. On his birthday he is blessed by the deities, and grand rituals are performed with meticulous perfection and devotion.

The morning began with an offering of rice and fruits to the four-armed Viṣṇu form of Lord Varadarāja and His consorts Lakṣmī, Śrī, and Bhū Devī. This was followed by a bathing ceremony, during which hymns from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Puruṣa-sūkta,* and *Tirupavai* were chanted. Priests offered sanctified food, sandalwood paste, and Tulasī flower garlands to the deities, and later distributed them to *brāhmaṇas* standing to the

left and right side of the shrine. At noon the deities went in procession around the temple. Two groups of *brāhmaṇas* followed the procession; those at the front chanted the *Divya Prabhanda* prayers (*Vedas* sung in Tamil by the Ālvārs), while those in back chanted Sanskrit Vedic hymns. The palanquin carriers lightly swung the deities to and fro as they approached the Sudarśana-Narasiṁha Temple, passing a flower garden that runs along most of the procession path. In the flower garden is a small pond where it is said that Sri Perundevi Tayar (Lakṣmī), the consort of Lord Varadarāja, originally appeared on a golden lotus.

Further along the path is a shrine to Rāmānujācārya, where the procession stopped so that he could receive the blessings of the Lord. Rāmānuja spent most of his youth serving Lord Varadarāja in Kanchi. He also met his gurus Yamunācārya and Mahāpūrṇa here for the first time.

Before the deities were respectfully put to rest, we completed circumambulation by arriving at the starting point, the shrine of Tata Deśika.

In the evening another procession took place, this time along the main temple road, and *brāhmaṇas* and pilgrims again escorted the gorgeously dressed deities.

One of the ornaments decorating Lord Varadarāja this time around was the Clive necklace. Robert Clive, the British governor of Madras during the 1700s, presented this necklace in appreciation to the Varadarāja deity after Clive's fight with the Mus-

lim Nawab of Arkad. On the way to Arkad, Clive stopped in Kanchi. Having felt severe stomach pains for several days, he was worried about the outcome of the impending battle. The priests gave him holy water and sanctified food, and upon taking these he was relieved of pain. In gratitude, he decided he would present to Lord Varadarāja the most valuable thing he captured from Arkad's treasury.

The Pandava Dootha Temple (left) is home to a twenty-five-foot-high deity of Kṛṣṇa. Paying homage to cows (below) is part of the ceremony that takes place each morning when the Ashtabhujam Temple opens for the day. Tirumalisai Ālvār (bottom) is worshiped at his birthplace in the Kanchipuram district.

Another time, while Lord Varadarāja was being fanned, Clive expressed his doubts about the deity feeling hot. Upon hearing this, the priest fanning the Lord wiped the deity's face with a small towel and gave it to Clive, who was amazed to find it wet.

In the late evening hours, before the deities were brought back to the temple, I went to see them with Sridhar Veerapuram, a Śri Vaiṣṇava I had met during the procession. He brought Lord Varadarāja's face to my attention. According to the history of the temple, Lord Varadarāja appeared from the fire of a sacrifice performed by Lord Brahmā. Sridhar said that the Lord acquired the pinkish spots on His face when He emerged from the fire. Sridhar spoke enthusiastically about the Lord, so I requested him to accom-

Sridhar, the author's guide (top), talks to pilgrims at the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple (right). Vedānta Deśika (top right) is worshiped in a shrine near the Deepa Prakash Temple. Elephants (above) are used in processions at the Kamakshi Temple.

pany me on my visit to the other temples of Kanchipuram.

Exploring the Opulence

The next day, Sridhar suggested we first complete our exploration of the shrines, pastimes, and architectural wealth of the Varadarāja Temple, and then go to the other temples. I gladly agreed.

Our morning began at the unavoidable *prasādam* stand prominently placed at the main entrance. Upon receiving the Lord's mercy in the form of food and perceiving a spiritual atmosphere, we walked down a hall of one hundred pillars that had magnetically attracted my sight with its astounding beauty. Dexterously carved on the monolithic black granite pillars are exquisite sculptures of dancers, men riding on various kinds of animals, avatars of Lord Viṣṇu, and scenes from the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa.* Certain parts of these carvings, like the bows, spears, and arrows, sound like the strumming of a tampura when struck. At the end of the hall stands a platform used for festivals, such as the reenactment of the marriage of Lord Varadarāja and Lakṣmī.

Almost adjoined to the back of the hall is Ananta Tirtham, a pond believed to have been created by Lord Ananta to witness the pastimes of Lord Varāha. (Lord Ananta is an incarnation of Lord Visnu who serves, in the form of a serpent, as Viṣṇu's couch.) The original deity of Lord Varadarāja is kept in a silver chest in a shrine inside this pond. Sridhar told me that once, during the intense heat of the summer, the deity felt hot and, appearing in the dream of one of

Pilgrims traveling from Chennai to Kanchipuram can visit the Narasimha Temple in Sholingur (above). At right: Sītā-Rāma, Lakāmaṇa, and Hanumān in the Yathoktakari Temple in Kanchipuram.

Near the Kamakshi Temple is the Kailasanath Temple (above) of Lord Śiva. At left: a wall sculpture in the Kailasanath Temple.

the priests, asked to be put into the water. Now every forty years the deity is taken out and worshiped for forty-eight days.

Sridhar and I next proceeded to the fourth area that encircles the main sanctum of Lord Varadarāja. Located here are Lord Rāma's shrine, a mirror hall, and a deity kitchen. Sridhar told me that traditionally only the healthiest and purest items—such as the fuelwood, vessels of bronze and silver, and water from the deities' own reservoir for cooking—are used for the Lord in this kitchen.

On the third circumambulation path we saw the shrines of Andal and Sri Perundevi Tayar, consort of Lord Varadarāja.

Next, we approached Lord Nṛsiṁha, to whom we prayed to protect our devotion. Lord Nṛsiṁha is worshiped at the base of a hill, in a cave rebuilt by Chola kings as a one-story building. Since Lord Nṛsiṁha gave permission to Brahmā to perform his sacrifices here, it is known as Nṛsiṁha Kṣetra ("Nṛsiṁha's Place").

The main temple houses the shrine to Lord Varadarāja, so, circling halfway around the building, we climbed the steps that lead toward it. As we did so, we noticed rough mountain rock poking through the plaster wall. Upon reaching the sanctum on the first floor, we were dazzled by the splendor of many ghee lamps, which revealed the Lord's form in a shrine accessible by several steps. The deity of Lord Varadarāja, whose name means "the king of those who give benedictions," is huge. In three of His hands He holds the insignias of conchshell, disc, and mace, while His lower right hand is raised in blessing, with the words *mā śucaḥ* ("Do not worry") inscribed on it. This means that He will fully care for and protect whoever surrenders unto Him. The Lord was richly decorated with costly jewels, and a huge golden necklace inscribed with the thousand names of Lord

This hall at the Vijay Raghava Temple in the Kanchipuram district commemorates the spot where Rāmānuja studied under Yādhava Prakāśa.

Viṣṇu hung around His neck.

The priest there offered us Tulasī leaves and *caraṇāmṛta* (water that has bathed the deity), and described the wonderful relationships between the Lord and His devotees. He spoke of the glories of Rāmānuja's guru Kāñcipūrṇa, whose simple and pure devotion enabled him to converse with the deity. And he told the story of Rāmānuja's disciple Kureśa, and how the evil King Kotalunga was so intolerant of Vaiṣṇavas that he viciously blinded him. Kureśa had been unselfishly ready to sacrifice his own life for the sake of his spiritual master. Therefore, due to his unconditional and surrendered service to his guru, Lord Varadarāja granted him transcendental sight.

Sridhar and I stayed there to hear about the Lord's wonderful reciprocation with His devotees for a long time, deeply moved by the power of His presence.

Temples Around Town

In the next few days, Sridhar and I visited other temples and shrines sacred to Vaiṣṇavas. Driving through the teeming city, we faced the inherent challenge of often finding the temples closed, since many of the smaller ones have irregular opening times due to lack of priests. Whenever our visit was successful, we emerged blissful, jubilant at being able to witness the Lord's many forms in Kanchipuram. Particularly impressive was the thirty-five-foot-high, twenty-four-foot-wide monolithic form of Lord Trivikrama (Vāmanadeva), as well as the twenty-five-foot-high deity known as Pandava Dootha ("Messenger of the Pāṇḍavas").

Another deity, Yathoktakari, manifests Himself in an exceptional lying posture. In every other temple where the deity of Lord Viṣṇu is in the reclining pose, He lies on His left side, but here He lies on His right, just to demonstrate His affection toward His devotees.

As the story goes, long ago a king banished the great devotee Tirumalasai Ālvār and his disciple Kanikannan from the city because they wouldn't comply with his request to rejuvenate his aging body so that he could go on enjoying sensual pleasures. On the request of Tirumalisai, Lord Yathoktakari followed him out of the city, creating a gloomy darkness in the city. Alarmed, the king apologized for his mistreatment. So Tirumalasai Ālvār returned to Kanchi with the Lord, who dispelled the darkness created in His absence.

Next, we visited the Kāmākṣī Temple. Though people generally worship the Kāmākṣī deity as Durgā, she is said to be Lakṣmī Devī in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,* where Lord Hayagrīva narrates her glories to the sage Agastya. Lord Hayagrīva mentions that King Daśaratha, ruler of Ayodhyā and father Lord Rāma, prayed to Kāmākṣī here to obtain children.

To visit the Vijaya Rāghava Temple, last on the list of the *divya deśams* in Kanchipuram, I took a local bus to Tiruputkuli, some seven kilometers from the town of Kanchipuram. According to the *Vāmana Purāṇa,* Lord Rāma performed funeral rites here for Jatāyu, the giant bird who valiantly fought to prevent Rāvaṇa from abducting Sītā, the wife of Lord Rāma.

The hall opposite the temple pond commemorates the place where Rāmānujācārya studied the *advaita* philosophy under Yādhava Prakāśa. Since Rāmānuja kept refuting the impersonal philosophy taught by his teacher, he was expelled from the ashram. Yādhava Prakāśa even made an attempt on his life, but fortunately, by the mercy of devotees, he later recognized Rāmānuja's saintly qualities and became his disciple.

In the nearly two weeks I spent in Kanchipuram, I continuously discovered the neverending glories of the Lord and His devotees. Every detail I tracked down revealed some almost forgotten and charming pastime of the Lord. My search seemed endless and therefore ever fresh and dynamic. It was stimulating for my intellect and nourishing for my soul. Now, after all my research, I bear in my mind a deep impression of the most auspicious, beautiful, and enchanting smile of Lord Varadarāja.

Adbhuta Hari Dāsa joined ISKCON in Croatia. He is a frequent contributor to BTG of photo articles on important Vaiṣṇava holy places in India.

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Note for international phone calls: When dialing from outside the country, drop the "0" that begins most city codes (the numbers shown in parentheses). **Exception:** For Russia, drop the initial "8." Telephone numbers include country codes, identified by a +. To save space, we've skipped the codes for North America (1) and India (91). ◆ Temples with restaurants or dining ★ New listing ● Revised listing

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OTHER COUNTRIES

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Tel. +852 (2) 739-6818/ Fax: +852 (2) 724-2186/ E-mail: iskcon.hong.kong@pamho.net
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Mandalay, Myanmar — ISKCON Sri Krishna Temple, Corner of 19th Thukha Street, Nanshe,
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U.S.A.

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Austin, Texas — 10700 Jonwood Way, 78753/ Tel. (512) 835-2121/ Fax: (512) 835-8479
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E-mail: webmaster@krishnanyc.com
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Fax: (215) 247-8702/ E-mail: iskconphilly@aol.com
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 1408 South St., 19146/ Tel. (215) 985-9335/
E-mail: savecows@aol.com
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E-mail: jayagaurasundar@gmail.com
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GERMANY

Abentheuer — Boecking Str. 4a, 55767/ Tel. +49 (06782) 980436/ Fax: +49 (06782) 980437/ E-mail: gaura.bhavini.sns@pamho.net
Berlin — Kastanien Allee 3, D-10435/ Tel. +49 (030) 44357296 or 44315921/ E-mail: harekrishna-berlin@pamho.net
◆ **Cologne —** Taunusstr. 40, 51105/ Tel. +49 (0221) 830-1241/ Fax: +49 (0221) 837-0485
Hamburg — Eiffestrasse 422, 20537 Hamburg/ Tel. +49 (040) 4102848
Heidelberg — Forum 5, Wohnung 4, Baden-Wurttemberg 69126/ Tel. & fax: +49 (06221) 384553/ E-mail: Vipula.ss@pamho.net
Munich — Wachenheimer Strasse 1, 81539/ Tel. +49 (089) 6880-0288/ Fax: +49 (089) 6880-0289/

RURAL COMMUNITY

Jandelsbrunn (Simhachalam) — Zielberg 20, 94118/ Tel +49 (08583) 316/ Fax: +49 (08583) 1671/ E-mail: njnk@pamho.net

HUNGARY

Budapest — Lehel Street 15-17, 1039 Budapest/ Tel. +36 (01) 391-0435/ Fax: (01) 242-3233/ E-mail: budapest@pamho.net
Debrecen — Csapo u. 1. III./4., 4024 Debrecen/ Tel. +36 (052) 431-727/ E-mail: debrecen@pamho.net
Eger — Szechenyi u. 64, 3300 Eger/ Tel. +36 (036) 410-515 or 313-761/ E-mail: eger@pamho.net
Kecskemet — Dobo krt. 3. II./3., 6000 Kecskemet (mail: Pf. 546, 6001 Kecskemet)/ Tel. +36 (076) 480-920/ E-mail: kecskemet@pamho.net
Miskolc — Bethlen G. u. 3, 3526 Miskolc/ Tel. +36 (046) 416-643/ E-mail: miskolc@pamho.net
Pecs — Agota u-1-3, 7625 Pecs/ Tel. +36 (072) 515-991/ Fax: (072) 313-771/ E-mail: pecs@pamho.net
Szeged — Berkert u. 25, 6723 Szeged/ Tel. +36 (062) 471-639/ E-mail: szeged@pamho.net

RURAL COMMUNITY

Somogyvamos — Krsna-völgy, Fö u. 38, 8699 Somogyvamos/ Tel. & fax: +36 (085) 540-002 or 340-185/ E-mail: krisna-volgy@pamho.net

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

● **Budapest —** Govinda Restaurant, Vigyazo Ferenc Street 4, 1051 Budapest/ Tel. +36 (01) 269-1625 or 302-2284/ Fax: (01) 473-1310/ E-mail: govinda@nvitel.hu

ITALY

Bergamo — Villaggio Hare Krishna (da Medolago strada per Terno d'Isola), 24040 Chignolo d'Isola (BG)/ Tel. +39 (035) 4940706
Catania — via della Regione 16 - Tarderia, 95030 Pedara CT/ Tel. +39 (095) 7896216
Milan — via Valpetrosa 5, 20123/ Tel. +39 (02) 862417/ Fax: +39 (035) 4940705 or 4940945/ E-mail: radharamana@lombardiacom.it
◆ **Rome —** Govinda Centro Hare Krsna, via Santa Maria del Pianto, 16, 00186/ Tel. +39 (06) 68891540/ E-mail: govinda.roma@harekrsna.it
Vicenza — via Roma 9, 36020 Albettone (VI)/ Tel. +39 (0444) 790573/ Fax: +39 (0444) 790581/ E-mail: giridhari.rns@pamho.net

RURAL COMMUNITY

◆ **Florence (Villa Vrindavan) —** via Scopeti 108, 50026 San Casciano in Val di Pesa (FI)/ Tel. +39 (055) 820054/ Fax: +39 (055) 828470/ E-mail: isvaripriya@libero.it

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Milan — Govinda's, via Valpetrosa 5, 20123/ Tel. +39 (02) 862417

SPAIN

Barcelona — Plaza Reial 12, Entlo 2, 08002/ Tel. +34 93 302-5194/ E-mail: templobcn@hotmail.com
Madrid — Espíritu Santo 19, 28004/ Tel. +34 91 521-3096
Málaga — Ctra. Alora, 3, Int., 29140 Churriana/ Tel. +34 95 262-1038/ E-mail: malaga@pamho.net

RURAL COMMUNITY

Brihuega (New Vraja Mandala) — (Santa Clara) 19411 Brihuega / Tel. +34 949 280436

RESTAURANT

Barcelona — Restaurante Govinda, Plaza de la Villa de Madrid 4–5, 08002/ Tel. +34 (93) 318-7729

SWEDEN

◆ **Gothenburg —** Karl Johansgatan 57, SE-414 55, Göteborg/ Tel. +46 (031) 879648 (restaurant: 421462)/ E-mail: info@harekrishnagoteborg.com (restaurant: info@govindasgoteborg.com)
Grödinge — Radha-Krishna Temple, Korsnäs Gård, 14792 Grödinge, Tel.+46 (08) 53029800/ Fax: +46 (08) 53025062/ E-mail: bmd@pamho.net
◆ **Lund —** Bredgatan 28, 222 21/ Tel. +46 (046) 399500; Restaurant: +46 (046) 120413/ Fax: +46 (046) 188804/ E-mail: locan@pamho.net
◆ **Stockholm —** Fridhemsgatan 22, 11240/ Tel. +46 (08) 654-9002/ Fax: +46 (08) 650-8813/ Restaurant: Tel. & fax: +46 (08) 654-9004/ E-mail: lokanatha@hotmail.com
Uppsala — Kragsta, Vassunda, 74191 Knivsta/ Tel. +46 (018) 381550/ E-mail: papujaka@hotmail.com

RURAL COMMUNITY

Järna — Almviks Gård, 153 95/ Tel. +46 (08551) 52050/ Fax: +46 (08551) 52060/ E-mail: almviks.gard@pamho.net

OTHER COUNTRIES

Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Van Hilligaertstraat 17, 1072 JX/ Tel. +31 (020) 675-1404 or -1694/ Fax: +31 (020) 675-1405/ E-mail: amsterdam@pamho.net
Antwerp, Belgium — Amerikalei 184, 2000/ Tel. +32 (03) 237-0037
Basel, Switzerland — St. Jakob-Strasse 33, 4132 Muttenz/ Tel. & fax: +41 (061) 462-0614/ E-mail: sacidulal.bcs@pamho.net
Cakovec, Croatia — Radnicka 2, Svaska ves, 40000 Cakovec/ Tel. & fax: +385 (040) 334312
Copenhagen, Denmark — Skjulhoj Alle 44, 2720 Vanlose, Copenhagen/ Tel. +45 4828 6446/ Fax: +45 4828 7331/ E-mail: iskcon.denmark@pamho.net
Helsinki, Finland — Ruoholahdenkatu 24 D (III krs) 00180/ Tel. +358 (9) 694-9879/ Fax: +358 (9) 694-9837/ E-mail: krishna@saunalahti.fi
Kaunas, Lithuania — 37, Savanoryu pr., 3000/ Tel. +370 (7) 22-2574 or 26-8953/ Fax: +370 (7) 70-6642
Kokosovce, Slovak Republic — Abranovce 60, 08252 Kokosovce/ Tel. +421 (51) 7798482
◆ **Lisbon, Portugal —** Rua Dona Estefania, 91 R/C 1000 Lisboa/ Tel. & fax: +351(01) 314-0314 or 352-0038/ E-mail: iskcon.lisbon@pamho.net
Ljubljana, Slovenia — Zibertova 27, 1000/ Tel. +386 (01) 4312319 or 4312124/ Fax: +386 (061) 310815/ E-mail: ananta.rns@pamho.net
◆ **Locarno, Switzerland —** Govinda Rama, Via Borghese 14, 6600/ Tel. +41 (091) 752-3851/ Fax: +41 (091) 752-3852/ E-mail: bhaktya.labhya.hks@pamho.net
Osijek, Croatia — Ivana Gundulica 9, 31000 Osijek/ Tel. +385 (031) 202759
Paris, France — 35 Rue Docteur Jean Vaquier, 93160 Noisy le Grand/ Tel. & fax: +33 (01) 4303-0951/ E-mail: paramgati.swami@pamho.net
Porto, Portugal — Rua S. Miguel 19, 4050-560 (mail: Apartado 4108, 4002-001)/ Tel. & fax: +351 (0222) 007-223/ E-mail: oriente.porto@teleweb.pt
Prague, Czech Republic — Jilova 290, Prague 5 - Zlicin 155 21/ Tel. +42 (02) 5795-0391/ E-mail: info@vedavision.cz
Pula, Croatia — Vinkuran centar 58, 52000 (mail: P.O. Box 16)/ Tel. & fax: +385 (052) 573581
◆ **Radhadesh, Belgium —** Chateau de Petite Somme, 6940 Septon-Durbuy/ Tel. +32 (086) 322926 (restaurant: 321421)/ Fax: +32 (086) 322929/ E-mail: radhadesh@pamho.net
◆ **Riga, Latvia —** 56, K. Baron st., LV1011/ Tel. +371 (02) 27-2490/ Fax: +371 (2) 27-4120
Rijeka, Croatia — Ivana Zajca 6/2, 51000 Rijeka (mail: P.O. Box 61)/ Tel. +385 (098) 697436/ E-mail: dvaraka-gamana.kkd@pamho.net
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina — ISKCON, Gornjo Vakufska 12, 71000/ Tel. +387 (071) 201530
Skopje, Macedonia — Vvz. "ISKCON," Roze Luksemburg 13, 91000/ Tel. +389 (091) 201451
Sofia, Bulgaria — 4 J. Kjuri Str., 1113 Sofia/ Tel. +359 (02) 9719714/ E-mail: oks_sofia@abv.bg
Sofia, Bulgaria — 119 Kliment Ohridski Str., kv. Malinova Dolina/ Tel. +359 (02) 9616050/ E-mail: oks_sofia@abv.bg
◆ **Tallinn, Estonia —** Luise Street 11a, 10142/ Tel. +372 6460047/ E-mail: tallinn@pamho.net
Timisoara, Romania — Porumbescu 92, 1900/ Tel. & fax +40 (056) 154776/
Vilnius, Lithuania — 23-1, Raugyklos G, 2024/ Tel. +370 (5) 2135218/ E-mail: vilnius@pamho.net
Warsaw, Poland — Mysiadlo k. Warszawy, 05-500 Piaseczno, ul. Zakret 11/ Tel. +48 (022) 750-7797 or -8247/ Fax: +48 (022) 750-8249/ E-mail: kryszna@post.pl
Wroclaw, Poland — ul. Brodzka 157, 54-067 Wroclaw/ Tel. & fax: +48 (071) 354-3802/ E-mail: kavicandra.kkd@pamho.net
Zagreb, Croatia — Centar Za Vedske Studije, II Bizet 36, 10000 (mail: P.O. Box 68, 10001)/ Tel. & fax: +385 (01) 3772-643/ E-mail: ripuha@pamho.net
Zürich, Switzerland — Bergstrasse 54, 8030/ Tel. +41 (01) 262-3388/ Fax: +41 (01) 262-3114/ E-mail: kgs@pamho.net

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Czech Republic — Krsnuv Dvur c. 1, 257 28 Chotysany/ Tel. +420 (0602) 375978

◆ **France (Bhaktivedanta Village) —** Chateau Bellevue, F-39700 Chatenois/ Tel. +33 (03) 8472-8235/ Fax: +33 (03) 8482-6973/ E-mail: guru-sakti.hks@pamho.net
France (La Nouvelle Mayapura) — Domaine d'Oublaisse, 36360, Lucay le Mâle/ Tel. +33 (02) 5440-2395/ Fax: +33 (02) 5440-2893/ E-mail: new.mayapur@pamho.net
Poland (New Santipur) — Czarnow 21, 58-424 Pisarzowice, woj. dolnoslaskie/ Tel. +48 (075) 744-8892/ E-mail: radhu@wp.pl

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Copenhagen, Denmark — Govinda's, Nøerre Farimagsgade 82, DK-1364 Kbh K/ Tel. +45 3333-7444
Oslo, Norway — Krishna's Cuisine, Kirkeveien 59B, 0364/ Tel. +47 (022) 606-250
Prague, Czech Republic — Govinda's, Soukenicka 27, 110 00 Prague-1/ Tel. +420 (02) 2481-6631 or 2481-6016/ E-mail: info@vedavision.cz
Prague, Czech Republic — Govinda's, Na hrazi 5, 180 00 Prague 8-Liben/ Tel. +420 (02) 683-7226/ E-mail: goodday@volny.cz
Prague, Czech Republic — Balarama Restaurant, Orlicka 9, Praha 3, Vinohrady 130 00/ Tel. & fax: +420 222 728 885
Presov, Slovak Republic — Govinda's, Hlavna 70, 08001/ Tel. +0042 (191) 722 819
Tallinn, Estonia — Damodara, Lauteri Street 1, 10114/ Tel. +372 6442650
Zürich, Switzerland — Govinda's Veda-Kultur, Preyergasse 16, 8001/ Tel. & fax: +41 (01) 251 88 59/ E-mail: info@govinda-shop.ch

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

RUSSIA

Astrahan — 141052, 8-59, Botvina st./ Tel. +7 (8510) 28-9431
Chita — 27, Kurnatovskogo st./ Tel. +7 (30222) 23-4971 or -0911
Ekaterinburg — 620078, G. Ekaterinburg, per. Otdelniy 5DK VOG/ Tel. +7 (3432) 74-2200 or 49-5262
Irkutsk — st. Krimskaya 6A/ Tel. (3952) 38-71-32 or 3240-62/ E-mail: iosk@iosk.irkutsk.su
Kazan — 13, Sortirovochnaya st, pos.Yudino/ Tel. +7 (8432) 55-2529 or 42-9991
Krasnodar — 418, Stepnaya st., selo Elizavetinskoye, Krsnodarski krai/ Tel. +7 (8612) 50-1694
Kurjinovo — 8, Shosseinaya st., pos. Ershovo, Urupski region, Karachayevo-Cherkessia
Moscow — 8/3, Khoroshevskoye sh. (mail: P.O. Box 69), 125284/ Tel. +7 (095) 255-6711/ Tel. & fax: +7 (095) 945-3317
Moscow — Nekrasovsky pos., Dmitrovsky reg., 141700/ Tel. +7 (095) 577-8543, -8601, or -8775/ Fax: +7 (095) 446-4746/ E-mail: shyama.rns@pamho.net
Murmansk — 16, Frolova st. (mail: P.O. Box 5823)/ Tel. +7 (8152) 58-9284/ E-mail: upendra@mun.rospac.ru
Nijny Novgorod — 14b, Chernigovskaya Str., 603001/ Tel. +7 (8312) 30-5197 or 25-2592
Novorossiysk — 117, Shillerovskaya st./ Tel. +7 (86134) 38-926 or 51-415
Novosibirsk —18/2 Kholodilynaya st., 630001/ Tel. +7 (3832) 46-2655 or -2666
Omsk — 664099, 42 10th Severnaya st. (mail: P.O. Box 8741)/ Tel. +7 (3812) 24-5310 or 41-4051
Perm — 12, Verhnekuryinskaya st., 614065/ Tel. +7 (3422) 33-5740 or 27-0681/ E-mail: ffl@pi.ccl.ru
Rostov-Na-Donu — 84/1, Saryana st., 344025 (mail: P.O. Box 64, 344007)/ Tel. & fax: +7 (8632) 51-0456
Samara — 122, Aeroportovskoye sh., Zubchininovka/ Tel. +7 (8462) 97-0318 or -0323
Simbirsk — 10, Glinki st., 432002/ Tel. +7 (8422) 21-4016
Sochi — 81a, Lesnaya st., Bytha/ Tel. +7 (8622) 98-5639/ Tel. & fax: +7 (8622) 97-2483
Ulan-Ude — Prirechnaya str. 23, 670013 (mail: P.O. Box 4268, 670000)/ Tel. +7 (3012) 30-795/ E-mail: abpchk@burnet.sibea.ru/ E-mail: iskcon@vtsnet.ru
Vladimir — Ul. Nikolo-Galeyskaya 56/25, 60000/ Tel. +7 (0922) 32-6726
● **Vladivostok —** Pikhtovaya St., 33/ Tel. +7 (4232) 35-30-26/ E-mail: nram@list.ru

RESTAURANTS

Ekaterinburg — Sankirtana, 33 Bardina st./ Tel. +7 (3432) 41-2737
St. Petersburg — Govinda's, 58, Angliysky pr., 190008/ Tel. +7 (812) 113-7896
● **Vladivostok —** Vedic Cuisine, 12, Oleansky pr./ Tel. +7 (4232) 26-89-43/ E-mail: nram@list.ru

UKRAINE

Dnepropetrovsk — Spusk Kalininskiy 39, 320038/ Tel. +380 (0562) 42-3631 or 45-4709/ E-mail: vibhuti@iskcon.dp.ua
Donetsk — 22, Rubensa st., Makeyevka 339018/ Tel. +380 (0622) 94-9104 or -3140/ E-mail: premada@iskcon.donetsk.ua
Kharkov — 43, Verknegievskaya St., Holodnaya Gora, 310015/ Tel. +380 (0572) 20-2167 or 72-6869/ E-mail: kharkov@pamho.net
Kiev — 21V, Dmitrievskaya ap.13, 01054/ Tel. +380 (044) 484-4042 or 482-1041/ Tel. & fax +380 (044) 484-0934
Kiev — 16, Zorany per., 04078/ Tel. +380 (044) 433-8312, or 434-7028 or -5533
Nikolaev — 5-8, Sudostroitelny per., 327052/ Tel. +380 (0510) 35-1734
Vinnica — 5, Chkalov st., 28601/ Tel. +380 (0432) 32-3152

OTHER COUNTRIES

Almaty, Kazakhstan — 5, Kommunarov per., 480022/ Tel. +7 (327) 235-3830 or -3930
Baku, Azerbaijan — 2, Zardobi per., Uzbekistan st., pos. 8th km. 370060/ Tel. +994 (12) 21-2376/ E-mail: baku@pamho.net
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan — 5, Omsky per., 720007/ Tel. +7 (3312) 24-2230 or 44-3776
Dushanbe, Tajikistan — 38, Anzob st., 734001/ Tel. +7 (3772) 27-1920 or -3990/ E-mail: gurupriy a@cada.tajik.net
Kishinev, Moldova — 13, A. Popovich st., 277022/ Tel. +373 (2) 55-8099 or 76-9254
Minsk, Belarus — 11, Pavlova st., 220053/ Tel. +375 (172) 13-0629
Sukhumi, Georgia — st. Pr-t Mira d 274/ Tel. +995 (8122) 2-9954
Tashkent, Uzbekistan — 54, Ul. Cervyakova, 700005/ Tel. +7 (3712) 93-0352 or 34-4612
Tbilisi, Georgia — 16, Kacharava st., Avchalskoye sh., 380053/ Tel. +995 (32) 62-3326 or 98-5812

RESTAURANT

Almaty, Kazakhstan — 4, Zalomova st., 480037/ Tel. +7 (327) 235-1444

AUSTRALASIA

AUSTRALIA

Adelaide — 25 Le Hunte St. (mail: P.O. Box 114, Kilburn, SA 5084)/ Tel. +61 (08) 8359-5120/ Fax: + 61 (08) 8359-5120/ E-mail: iskconsa@tpg.com.au
Brisbane — 95 Bank Rd., Graceville (mail: P.O. Box 83, Indooroopilly), QLD 4068/ Tel. +61 (07) 3379-5455/ Fax: +61 (07) 3379-5880/ E-mail: brisbane@pamho.net
● **Canberra —** 1 Quick St., Ainslie, ACT 2602 (mail: P.O. Box 1411, Canberra, ACT 2601)/ Tel. & fax: +61 (02) 6262-6208/ E-mail: iskcon@harekrishnacanberra.com
Melbourne — 197 Danks St. (mail: P.O. Box 125), Albert Park , VIC 3206/ Tel. +61 (03) 9699-5122/ Fax: +61 (03) 9690-4093/ E-mail: melbourne@pamho.net
Newcastle — 28 Bull St., Mayfield, NSW 2304/ Tel. +61 (02) 4967-7000/ E-mail: iskcon_newcastle@yahoo.com.au
Perth — 144 Railway Parade (corner of The Strand) [mail: P.O. Box 102], Bayswater, WA 6053/ Tel. +61 (08) 9370-1552/ Fax: +61 (08) 9272-6636/ E-mail: iskconperth@optusnet.com.au
Sydney — 180 Falcon St., North Sydney, NSW 2060 (mail: P.O. Box 459, Cammeray, NSW 2062)/ Tel. +61 (02) 9959-4558/ Fax: +61 (02) 9957-1893/ E-mail: info@iskcon.com.au
Sydney — Govinda's Yoga and Meditation Centre, 112 Darlinghurst Rd., Darlinghurst NSW 2010/ Tel. +61 (02) 9380-5155/ E-mail: info@govindas.com.au

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Bambra, VIC (New Nandagram) — 50 Seaches Outlet, off 1265 Winchelsea Deans Marsh Rd., Bambra VIC 3241/ Tel. +61 (03) 5288-7383/ E-mail: iskcon@bigpond.net.au
Cessnock, NSW (New Gokula) — Lewis Lane (off Mount View Rd., Millfield, near Cessnock [mail: P.O. Box 399, Cessnock, NSW 2325])/ Tel. +61 (02) 4998-1800/ Fax: (Sydney temple)
Murwillumbah, NSW (New Govardhana) — Tyalgum Rd., Eungella (mail: P.O. Box 687), NSW 2484/ Tel. +61 (02) 6672-6579/ Fax: +61 (02) 6672-5498/ E-mail: ajita@in.com.au

RESTAURANTS

Brisbane — Govinda's, 99 Elizabeth St., 1st floor, QLD 4000/ Tel. +61 (07) 3210-0255
Brisbane — Krishna's Cafe, 1st Floor, 82 Venture St., West End, QLD 4000/ E-mail: brisbane@pamho.net
Cairns — Gaura Nitai's, 55 Spence St., Cairns, QLD/ Tel. +61 (07) 4031-2255 or (0425) 725 901/ Fax: +61 (07) 4031 2256/ E-mail: gauranitais@in.com.au
Maroochydore — Govinda's Vegetarian Cafe, 2/7 First Avenue, QLD 4558/ Tel. +61 (07) 5451-0299
Melbourne — Crossways, 1st Floor, 123 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-2939
Melbourne — Gopal's, 139 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-1578
New Castle — Krishna's Vegetarian Cafe, 110 King Street, corner of King & Wolf Streets, NSW 2300/ Tel. +61 (02) 4929-6900
Perth — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 200 William St., Northbridge, WA 6003/ Tel. +61 (08) 9227-1684/ E-mail: perth@pamho.net

NEW ZEALAND, FIJI, AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Auckland, NZ — The Loft, 1st Floor, 103 Beach Road/ Tel. +64 (09) 3797301
Christchurch, NZ — 83 Bealey Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 25-190)/ Tel. +64 (03) 366-5174/ Fax: +64 (03) 366-1965/ E-mail: iskconchch@clear.net.nz
Hamilton, NZ — 188 Maui St., RD 8, Te Rapa/ Tel. +64 (07) 850-5108/ E-mail: rmaster@wave.co.nz
Labasa, Fiji — Delailabasa (mail: P.O. Box 133)/ Tel. +679 812912
Lautoka, Fiji — 5 Tavewa Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 125)/ Tel. +679 664112/ Fax: +679 663039
Nausori, Fiji — Hare Krishna Cultural Centre, 2nd Floor, Shop & Save Building 11 Gulam Nadi St., Nausori Town (mail: P.O. Box 2183, Govt. Bldgs., Suva)/ Tel. +679 9969748 or 3475097/ Fax: +679 3477436/ E-mail: vdas@frca.org.fj
Rakiraki, Fiji — Rewasa (mail: P.O. Box 204)/ Tel. +679 694243
Suva, Fiji — 166 Brewster St. (mail: P.O. Box 4229)/ Tel. +679 331 8441/ Fax: +679 331 9097/ E-mail: iskconsuva@connect.com.fj
Wellington, NZ — 105 Newlands Rd., Newlands/ Tel. +64 (04) 478-4108/ E-mail: iskcon.wellington@paradise.net.nz
Wellington, NZ — Gaura Yoga Centre, 1st Floor, 175 Vivian St. (mail: P.O. Box 6271, Marion Square)/ Tel. +64 (04) 801-5500

RURAL COMMUNITY

Auckland, NZ (New Varshan) — Hwy. 28, Riverhead, next to Huapai Golf Course (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu)/ Tel. +64 (09) 412-8075/ Fax: +64 (09) 412-7130

RESTAURANTS

Auckland, NZ — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 268 Karangahape Road/ Tel. +64 (09) 300-7585
Labasa, Fiji — Hare Krishna Restaurant, Naseakula Road/ Tel. +679 811364
Lautoka, Fiji — Gopal's, Corner of Yasawa St. and Naviti St./ Tel. +679 662990
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Dolphins FNPF Place, Victoria Parade/ Tel. +679 314154/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Opposite University of the South Pacific, Laucala Bay Rd./ Tel. +679 311683/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, 18 Pratt St./ Tel. +679 314154
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, 82 Ratu Mara Rd., Samabula/ Tel. +679 386333
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Terry Walk, Cumming St./ Tel. +679 312295

AFRICA

GHANA

Accra — Samsam Rd., Off Accra-Nsawam Hwy., Medie, Accra North (mail: P.O. Box 11686)/ Tel. & fax +233 (021) 229988
Kumasi — Twumduase Land, Near Emina Hospital (mail: P.O. Box KS 10076)/ E-mail: shastra316@yahoo.com
Nkawkaw — P. O. Box 69
Sunyani — Plot No. 146, South Ridge Estates (mail P.O. Box 685)
Takoradi — New Amanful, P.O. Box 328
Tarkwa — State Housing Estate, Cyanide

RURAL COMMUNITY

Eastern Region — Hare Krishna Farm Community, P.O. Box 15, Old Akrade

NIGERIA

Abeokuta — Ibadan Rd., Obanatoka (mail: P.O. Box 5177)
Benin City — 108, Lagos-Uselu Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 1207)/ Tel. +234 (052) 258636
Enugu — 5/6, Destiny Layout, Old Abakaliki Rd., Near Enugu Airport, Emene
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Evidence of What's Important

WE STUDENTS of Śrīla Prabhupāda are all indebted to the Bhaktivedanta Archives for producing the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase, the searchable database of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, lectures, and conversations. One of the benefits of the VedaBase is that it allows us to discover quickly how often Prabhupāda said something. From that we can often infer which points of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness he felt required the most emphasis. I myself have sometimes been under the impression that Prabhupāda emphasized a particular point, only to learn through the VedaBase that he mentioned it rarely—I just happen to have listened repeatedly to a lecture where he talks about it.

One thing that's clear is that Prabhupāda was especially fond of certain scriptural verses, many of which he quoted over and over again, and a few of which he chose to lecture on repeatedly. From the VedaBase I learned that the verse Prabhupāda spoke on most often was *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.1: "The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, 'Now hear, O son of Pṛthā, how by practicing yoga in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me, you can know Me in full, free from doubt.'"

Judging by the frequency with which Prabhupāda spoke on (and quoted) this verse, I can safely say that it's a very important one. One point from this verse that Prabhupāda would stress is that, despite what others may say, we can in fact know God. Skeptics may say that even if God existed He would be too great for us to know. But here Kṛṣṇa responds to that idea: We can know God because God teaches us about Himself. To paraphrase Kṛṣṇa: "Hear from Me how you can know Me through yoga."

Kṛṣṇa not only reveals the true purpose of yoga; He also tells Arjuna the essential quality of yoga: It must be done "in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me."

No wonder Prabhupāda liked this verse so much. It summarizes the purpose of his movement, which is the same as Kṛṣṇa's purpose in speaking the *Bhagavad-gītā*—to guide people in *bhakti-yoga,* by which they can develop knowledge of Kṛṣṇa and love for Him.

Another important point in the verse is that one can not only know God but can know Him "free from doubt." Our normal condition in this world is to be unsure about God and the nature of reality. Is it possible we could ever truly know the answers to the big questions? Most people would say no—we all have our own opinions, but no one knows anything for sure.

Kṛṣṇa disagrees. He says that if we practice *bhakti-yoga* we can know Him without doubts. He gives us a method by which we can see Him face to face. And that vision—that full realization—shines the light of clarity on everything. That's a point Prabhupāda made many times: One who truly knows Kṛṣṇa knows everything. Don't believe me? Look it up in the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase.

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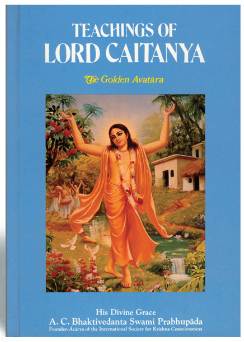
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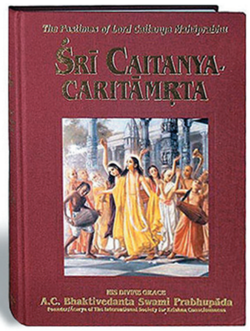
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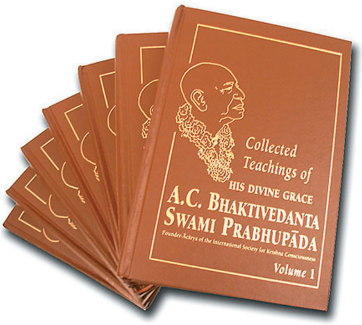
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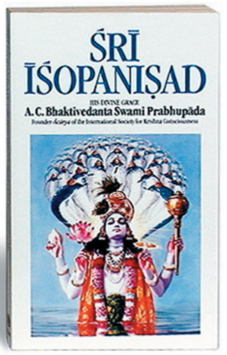
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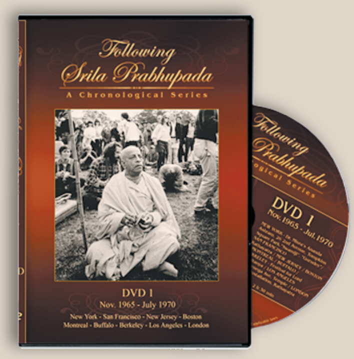
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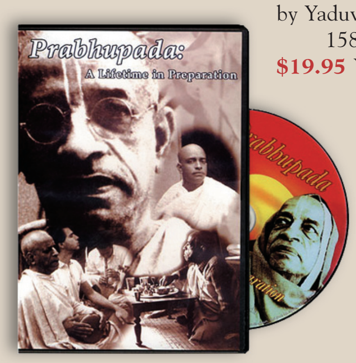
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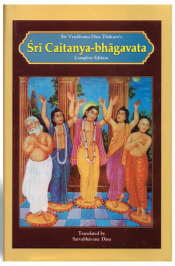
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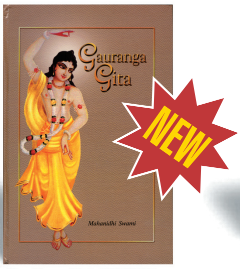
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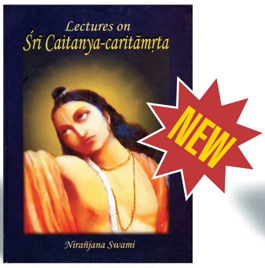
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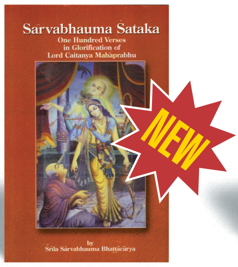
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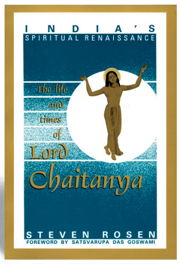
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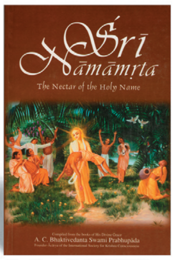
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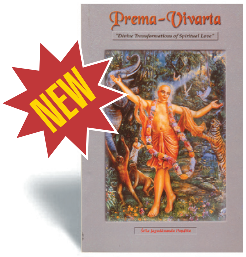
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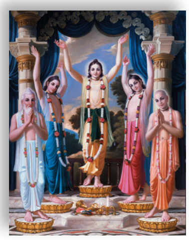
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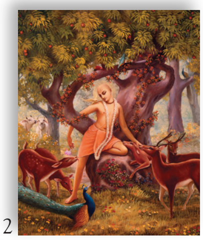
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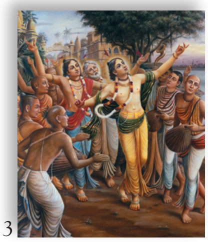
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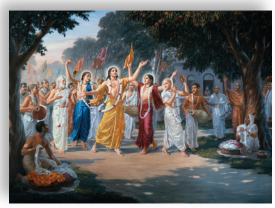
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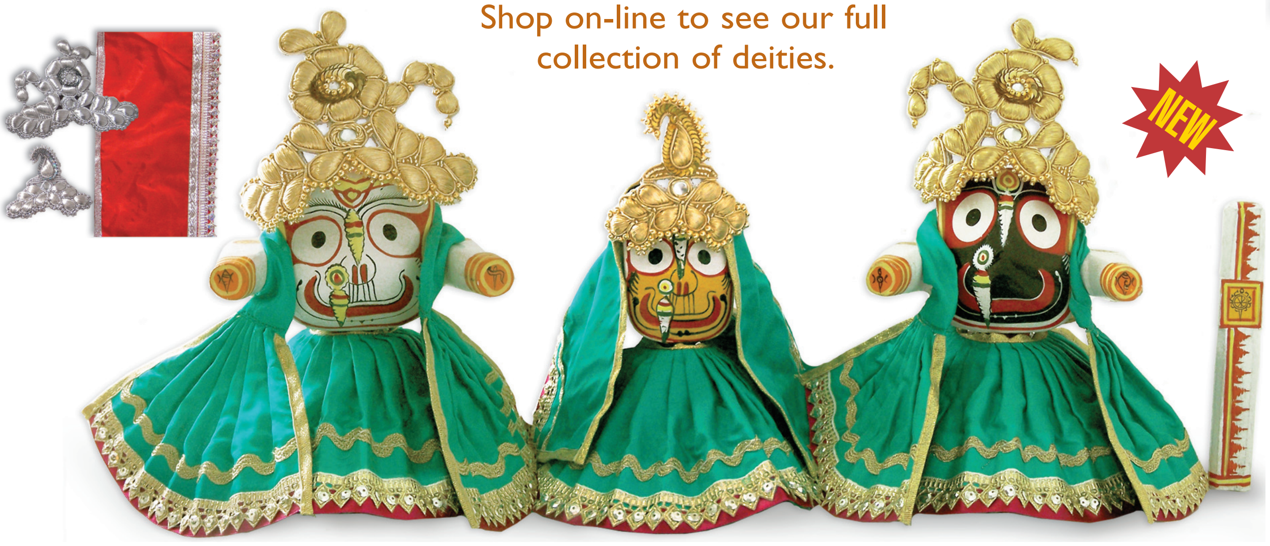
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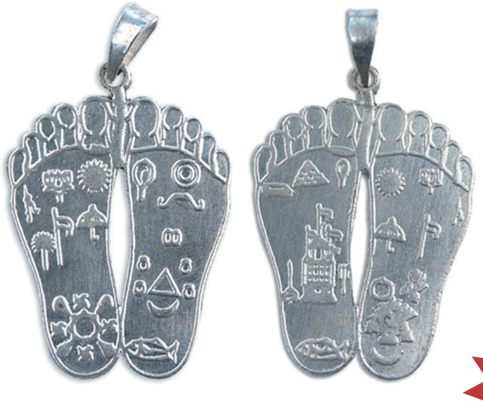

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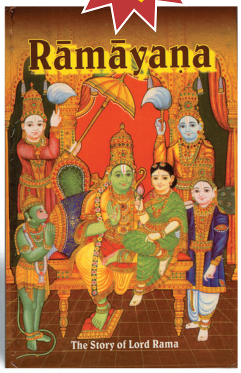
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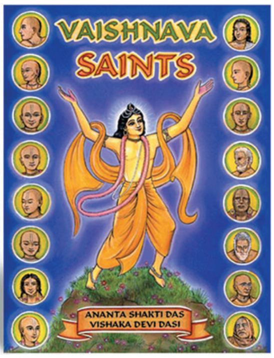
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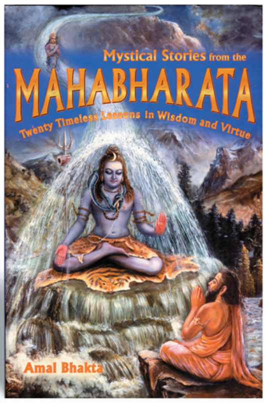
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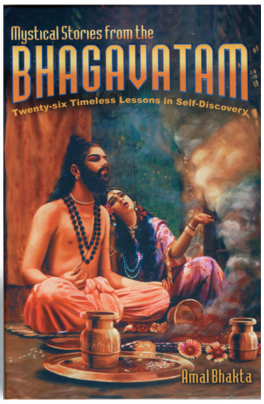
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One who disbelieves in the *śāstras* [scriptures] is an atheist, and we should not consult an atheist, however great he may be. A staunch believer in the *śāstras,* with all their diversities, is the right person from whom to gather real knowledge. Such knowledge may seem inconceivable in the beginning, but when put forward by the proper authority its meaning is revealed, and then one no longer has any doubts about it.

—His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 5.14, Purport

This is the divinity of the Personality of Godhead: He is not affected by the qualities of material nature, even though He is in contact with them. Similarly, the devotees who have taken shelter of the Lord do not become influenced by the material qualities.

—Sūta Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.11.38

Although the quality of being self-satisfied is eternally present in Kṛṣṇa, the quality of enjoying pastimes is also eternally present in Him. For the Supreme Lord to possess contradictory characteristics in perfect harmony is natural. In one aspect, Kṛṣṇa has the quality of self-satisfaction, and in another aspect, He manifests His opposite quality of enjoying pastimes with others.

—Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta 2.7.7

By one's engaging in the processes of demigod worship, austerities, breath control, compassion, bathing in holy places, strict vows, charity, and chanting of various mantras, one's mind cannot attain the same absolute purification as that achieved when the unlimited Personality of Godhead appears within one's heart.

—Bhūmī Devī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.48

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the all-powerful, all-pervading Supreme Personality of Godhead, and He is the object of the prayers and worship of the demigods. Intelligent persons worship Him as He resides in His own spiritual abode. They thus attain the eternal transcendental bliss that is not available for others.

—*Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* 1.21

When the Lord is served with loving affection, one realizes His glory. By such means one becomes free of sorrow and victorious over death, and one ascends to the eternally manifest spiritual sky called Mahā-Vaikuṇṭha.

—*Śvesāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.7–8

The *saṅkīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa's names is praised as the best and most powerful means to attain the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema* [pure love for Kṛṣṇa]. It is like a potent mantra that can attract precious objects from a distance.

—Associates of Lord Viṣṇu
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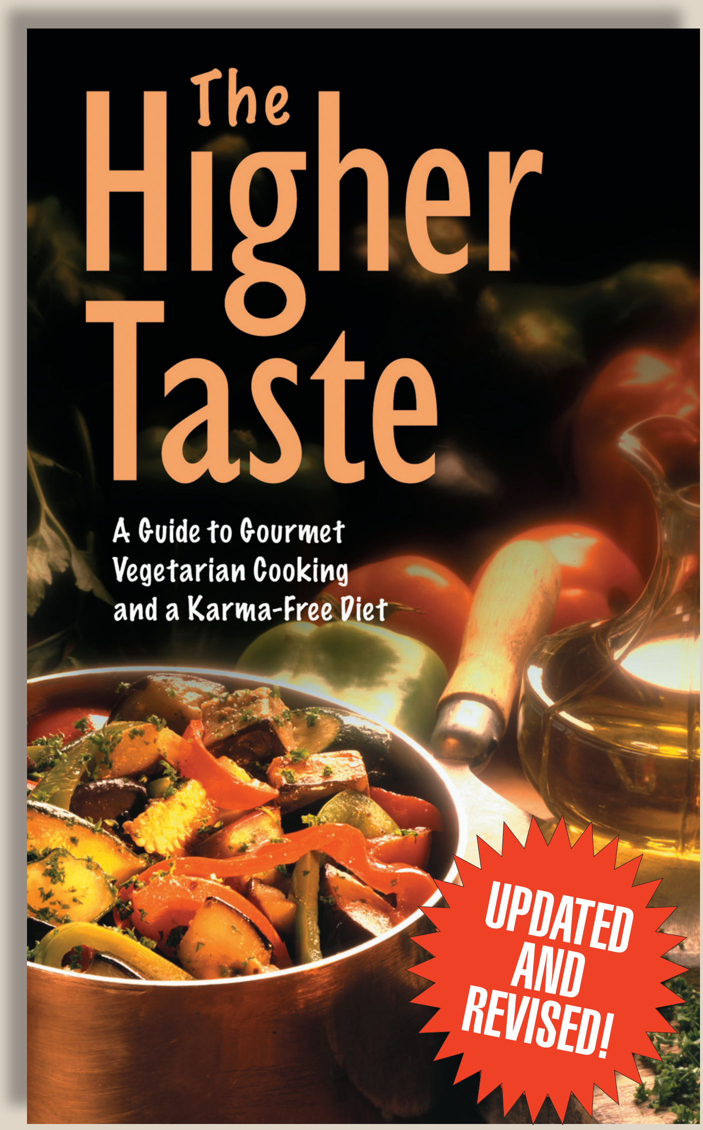
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